宗像教授伝奇考

【第七集】

むなかたきょうじゅでんきこう

星野之宣

Hoshino Yukinobu

潮漫画文庫

宗像教授伝奇考
【第七集】
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実在しないはずの"龍"の姿を
天武天皇は一瞬かいま見た!?
「われに龍神の加護あり」と神がかりの機略。
史書には中国の黄帝、周の文王に勝る、の記述。
長安に匹敵する日本最古の計画的首都建設。
天武天皇の行動の軌跡は、
漢の高祖劉邦と見事にだぶる…。
宗像教授の洞察力が、
"龍神"の虚実有無を解き放つ。

〈龍神都市〉より

❖星野之宣❖

一九五四年一月二十九日、北海道帯広市に生まれる。愛知県立芸大中退。
一九七五年「鋼鉄のクイーン」でデビューし、同年「はるかなる朝」で手塚賞受賞。
以来、宇宙、海洋、伝奇、SF等、スケールの大きい本格派SF漫画家として活躍。
徹底した取材と科学的知識に基づく、卓抜なアイディア、壮大で緻密なストーリー
繊細なペンタッチが多くの読者をひきつけている。
代表作に、「妖女伝説」「2001夜物語」「ヤマタイカ」「ブルーホール」
「未来の二つの顔」「メガクロス」「宗像教授伝奇考」など多数。

BOOK DESIGN❖TAKAHASHI JUNZI

――お互いに作品で扱う題材が重なっていることに対して、どのように感じておられますか。

星野　基本的に同じものを扱っていても、全然違う作品が出来てくるという変な信頼感はあります。

諸星　僕は、他の人が同じ題材だと気にしちゃう。でも、ここまで違うと、もう。

星野　ほとんどお互いに見なくていい。相手が何を描いていようと自分には関係ないというか、見なくても似たようなものになる恐れはない、と思いますよ。

諸星さんは、きっと、世界中でこの話を考えるのは自分だけだと思っているんですよ。他に似たような話を考える人がいるなんて、まず考えない。

（スペシャル対談［星野之宣×諸星大二郎］より）

THE LEGENDARY MUSINGS OF PROFESSOR MUNAKATA

VOLUME 7

HOSHINO YUKINOBU

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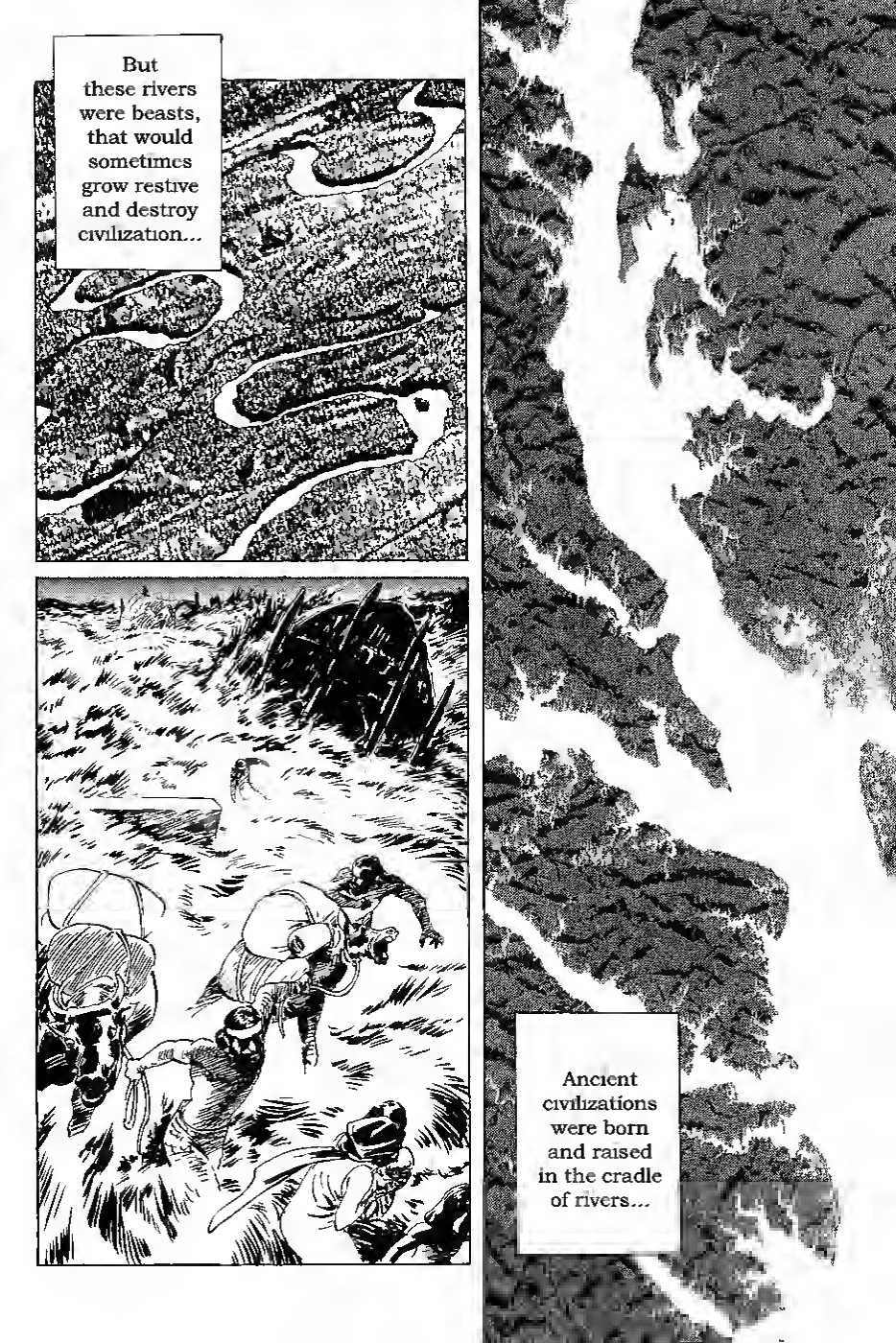
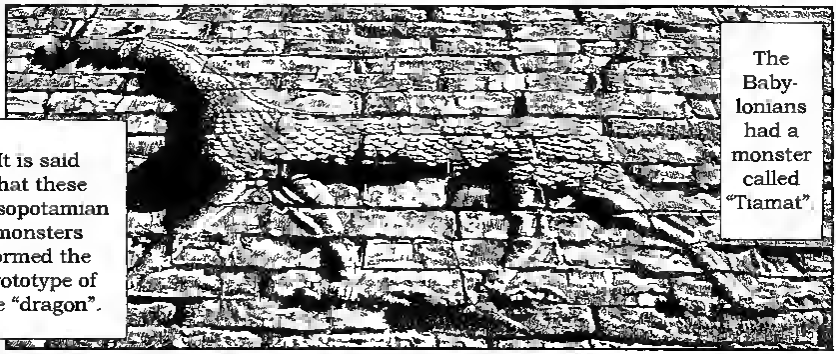
file.36

THE DRAGON GOD'S CITY: PART ONE


But these rivers were beasts, that would sometimes grow restive and destroy civilization...
Ancient civilizations were born and raised in the cradle of rivers...

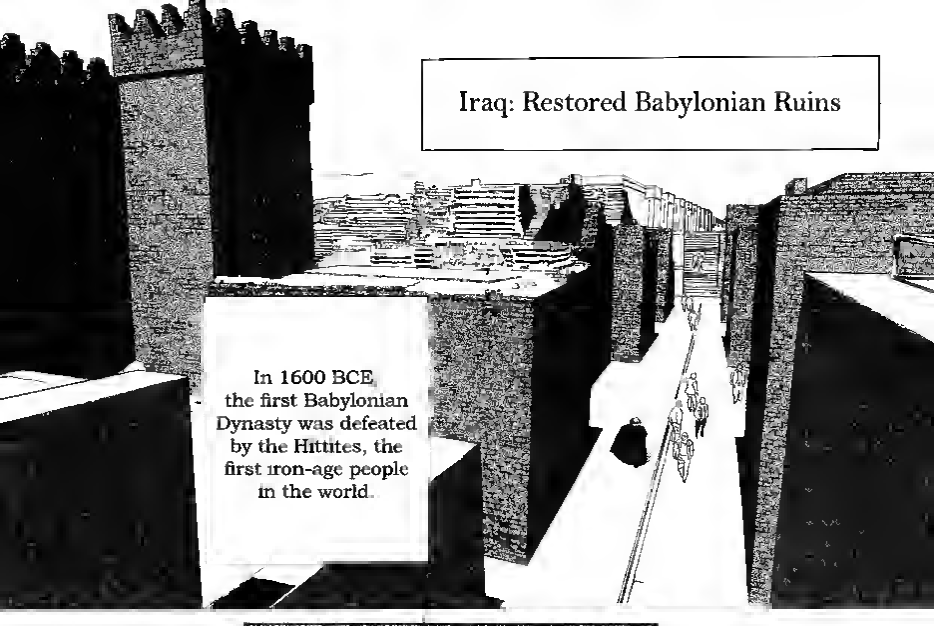
Sumerian mythology tells of a flood-causing monster called "Kur", which was defeated by a hero.



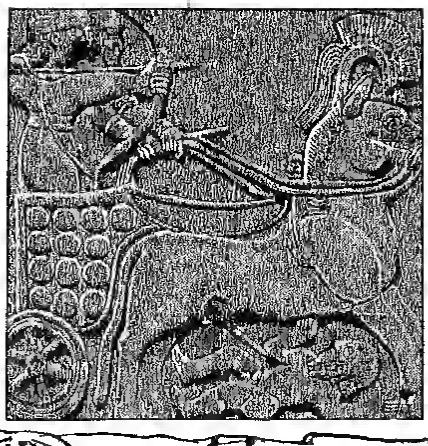
The Babylonians had a monster called "Tiamat".

It is said that these Mesopotamian monsters formed the prototype of the "dragon".

Iraq: Restored Babylonian Ruins

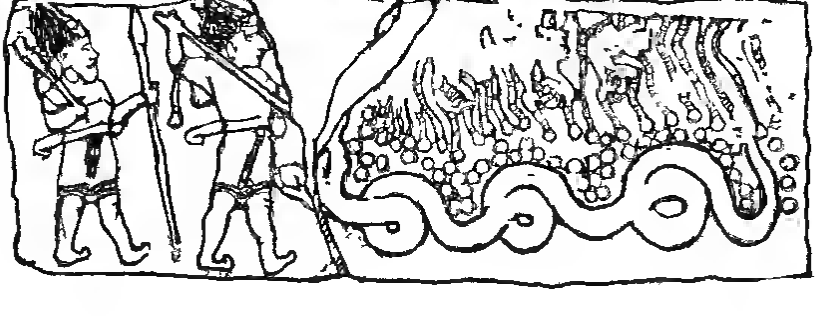


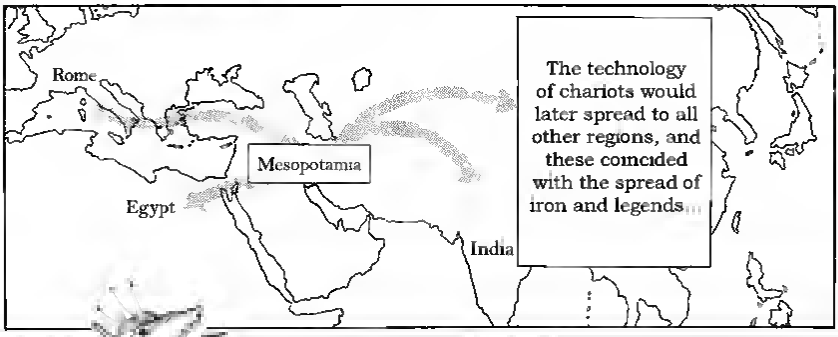
In 1600 BCE, the first Babylonian Dynasty was defeated by the Hittites, the first iron-age people in the world.

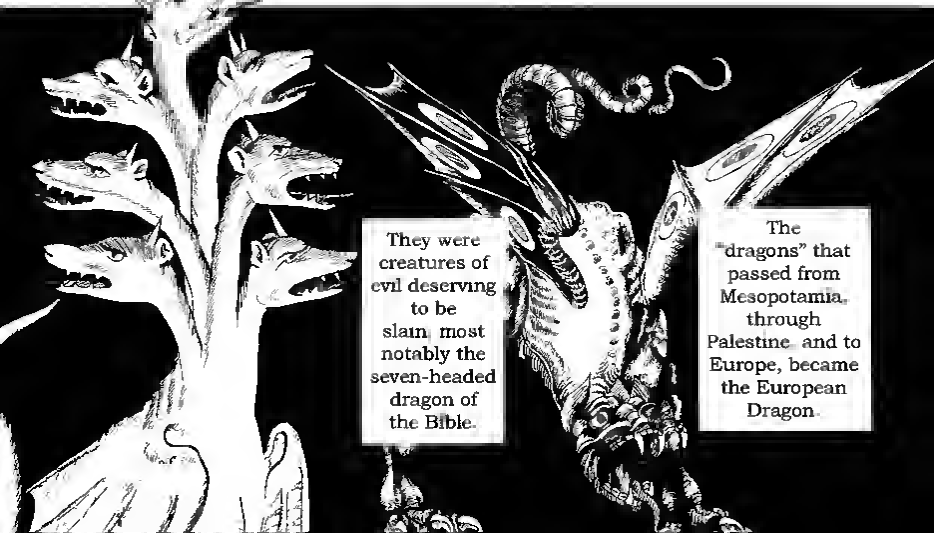


They, too, told of a myth of a flood-causing Dragon God named "Illuyankas", who was defeated by a hero.

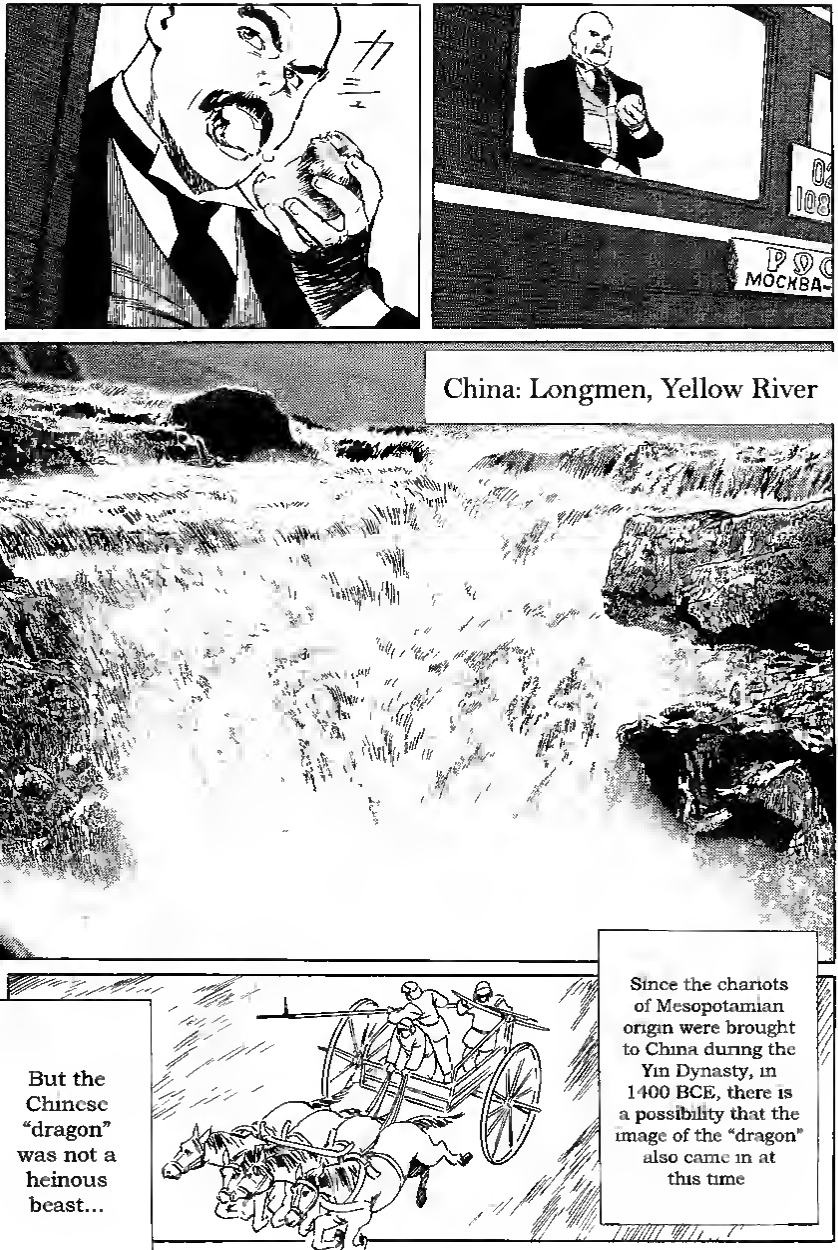
The Hittites swept over Mesopotamia with their iron weapons and ground-breaking chariots...

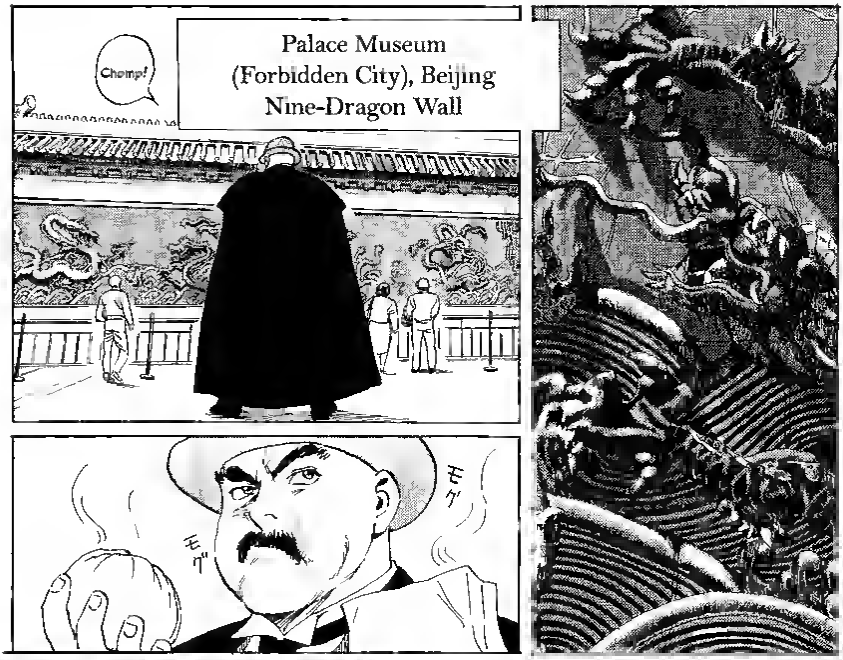


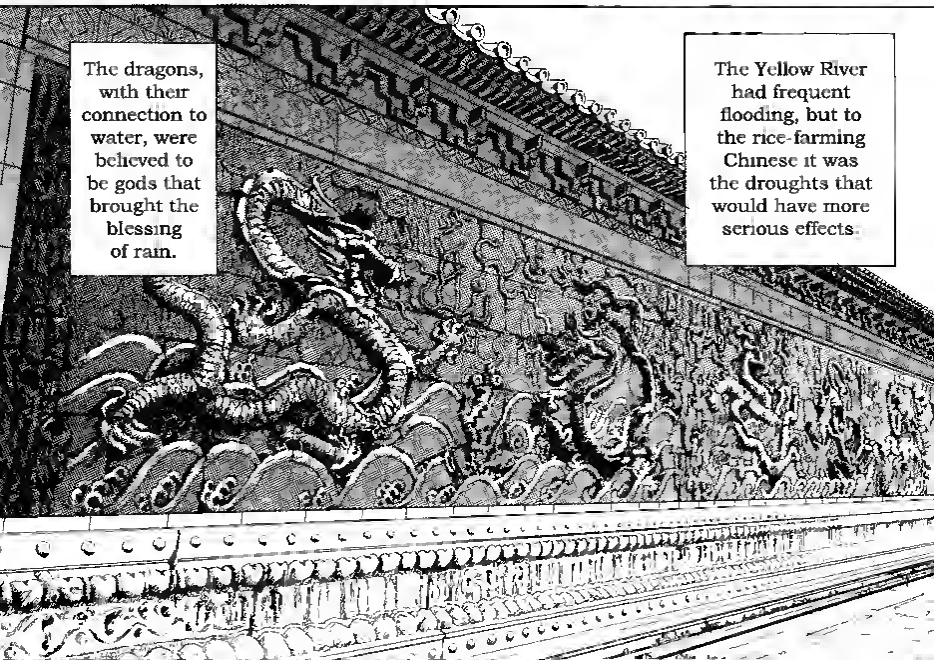

Rome
Mesopotamia
Egypt
India
The technology of chariots would later spread to all other regions, and these comcided with the spread of iron and legends.

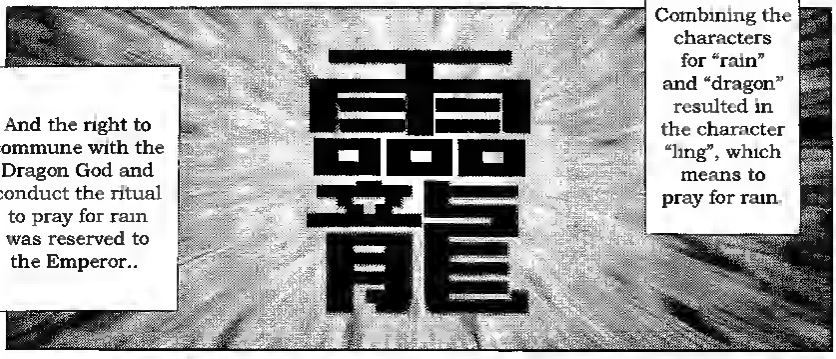

They were creatures of evil deserving to be slain, most notably the seven-headed dragon of the Bible.
The "dragons" that passed from Mesopotamia, through Palestine and to Europe, became the European Dragon.

The legend was tied in with the local faith in cobras, and thus the myth of the Seven-Headed Naga was born.
Meanwhile, in Asia, the Indo-European tribe known as the Aryans began to invade India in 1500 BCE, similar to the Hittites.
And further east...


China: Longmen, Yellow River
But the Chinese "dragon" was not a heinous beast...
Since the chariots of Mesopotamian origin were brought to China during the Yin Dynasty, in 1400 BCE, there is a possibility that the image of the "dragon" also came in at this time

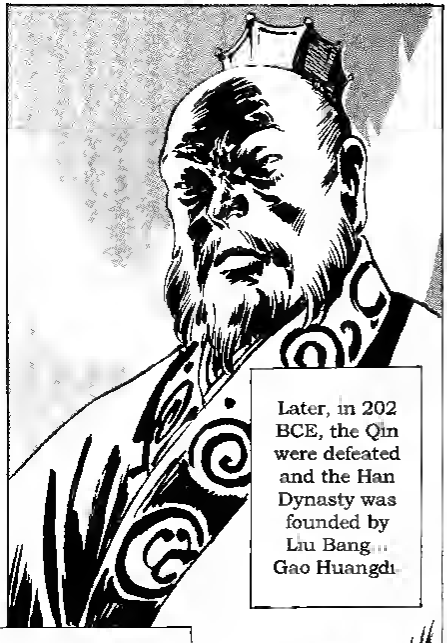

Chomp!
Palace Museum
(Forbidden City), Beijing
Nine-Dragon Wall


The dragons, with their connection to water, were believed to be gods that brought the blessing of rain.
The Yellow River had frequent flooding, but to the rice-farming Chinese it was the droughts that would have more serious effects.



Combining the characters for "rain" and "dragon" resulted in the character "ling", which means to pray for rain.

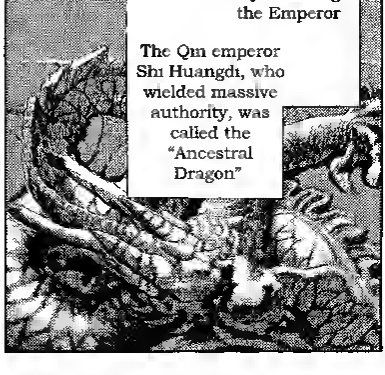
And the right to commune with the Dragon God and conduct the ritual to pray for rain was reserved to the Emperor..



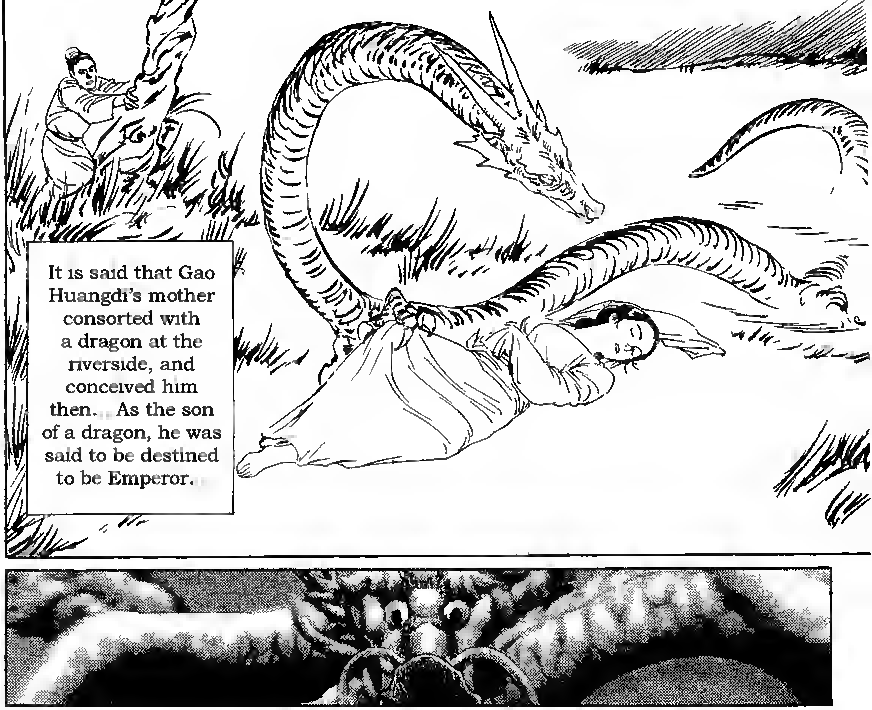
Later, in 202 BCE, the Qin were defeated and the Han Dynasty was founded by Liu Bang a.k.a. Gao Huangdi.

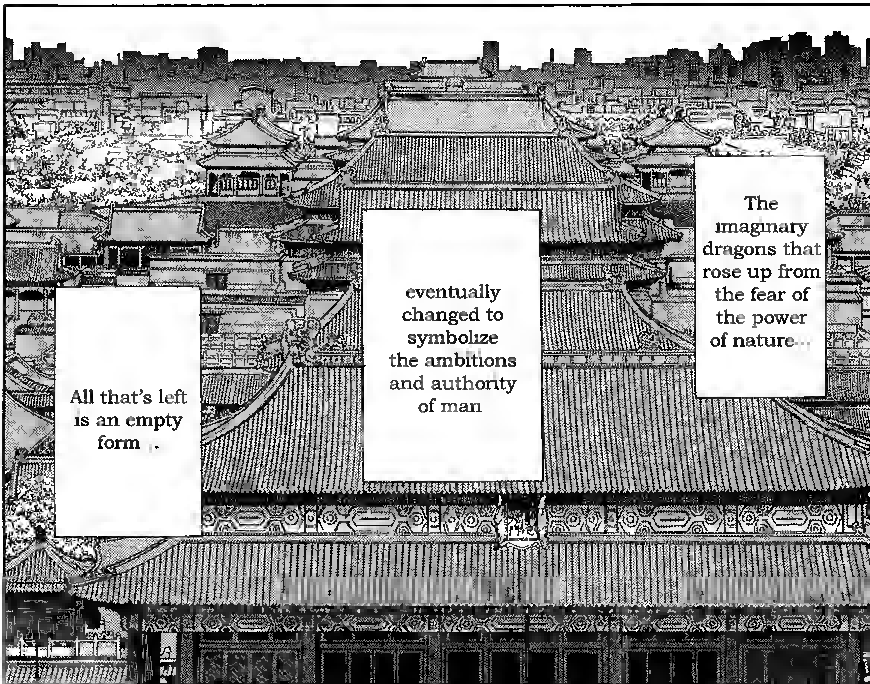
Before long, the Dragon became a sacred beast symbolizing the Emperor

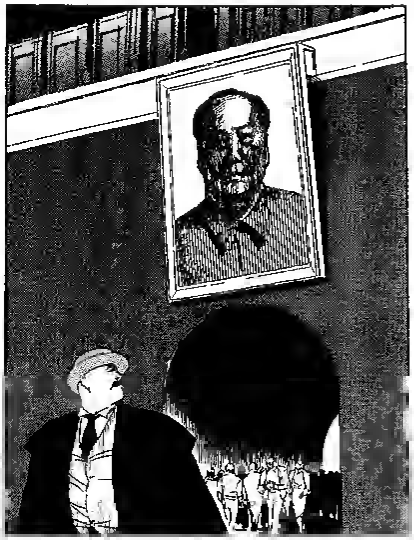
The Qin emperor Shi Huangdi, who wielded massive authority, was called the "Ancestral Dragon"



At a young age, he tread on and killed a white serpent, the symbol of the Qin, then brandished a red flag and claimed the royalty... The "Historical Records" have a mysterious legend about his birth as well.


It is said that Gao Huangdi's mother consorted with a dragon at the riverside, and conceived him then... As the son of a dragon, he was said to be destined to be Emperor.


All that's left is an empty form...
eventually changed to symbolize the ambitions and authority of man
The imaginary dragons that rose up from the fear of the power of nature...



AIR CHINA
中国国际航空公司

Japan
Welcome back, Professor Munakata!
Rindo...!

How's your newly-married life with Ike? I hope she's doing well.
Yes, thanks to you... She was hoping to come with me today, but she couldn't get work off...
Perhaps I shouldn't have given you a courtesy call from Beijing. I didn't need a ride from the airport.
We're living in hard times now. She's decided to stay in the editing department for a little longer. Perhaps part of it's that I don't make much on an assistant professor's salary. Haha...
Work? But I thought she was resigning upon marriage...
Ike's supervising me again...!?
Oh, right, she says she'll be your supervisor for the Zodiac Series again...

Today's the Year of the Dragon, so dragons are going to be this year's theme.

She made it clear that this is her life's work.

ブオオ

NEW TOKYO INTERNATIONAL

新聞

TREMORS IN EAST ASIA UNIVERSITY OF CULTURE

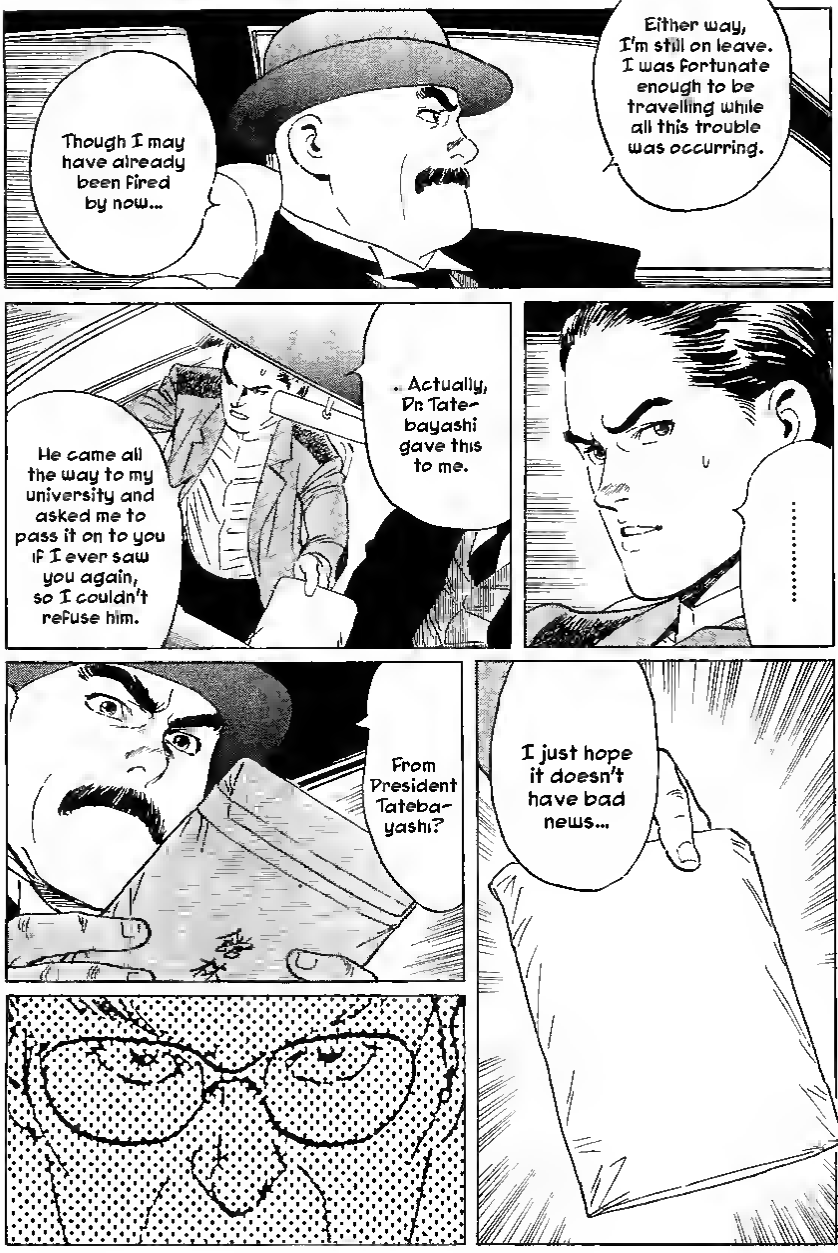
UNIVERSITY PRESIDENT BEING HELD ACCOUNTABLE

President Tatebayashi

Students perplexed by the string of turmoil (on campus)

ONE SCAND AFT ANO

That's today's newspaper. I figured that you needed to know about this right off the bat...
Good grief...
There's been a string of scandals in your university over these past six months,
from arranging backdoor admissions and colluding with businesses, to leaking national exam questions, and even sexual harassment—
I may not like him much, but it seems they're driving out the very man they brought in...
They say that since Dr Tatebayashi, who was invited as school president from T[redacted] University, has dominated the faculty council and begun imposing an authoritarian system, the alumni association and board of directors are backlashing—
It's very notable that the scandals being discovered seem to be targeting exclusively the professors in the president's camp—
Rumor has it that this is all tied in to a power struggle within the school.
責任
学長


Either way, I'm still on leave. I was fortunate enough to be travelling while all this trouble was occurring.
Though I may have already been fired by now...
. Actually, Dr. Tatebayashi gave this to me.
He came all the way to my university and asked me to pass it on to you if I ever saw you again, so I couldn't refuse him.
.....
From President Tatebayashi?
I just hope it doesn't have bad news...

Research on
Asuka Period
Tatebayashi M
New Research on
the Asuka Period
Tatebayashi Masahito

10 days later
Asuka,
Nara Prefecture

Asuka Village/Hill, Sakafune Stone Ruins

Have you gained weight, Professor Munakata? I'll bet you've been eating a lot in your travels.

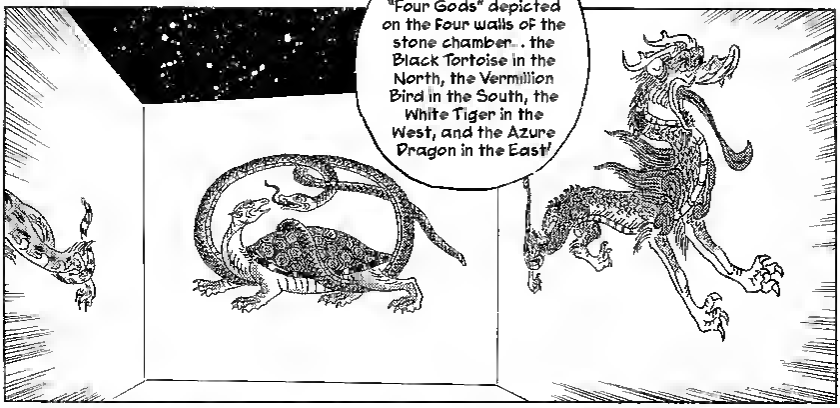
Shugen!

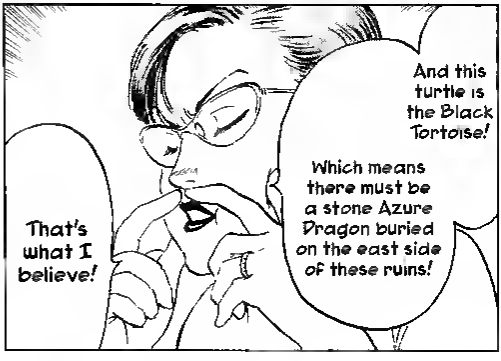
I've got a build that I can cram all the knowledge and food I want into.

Looks like it's been buried back up. We can't see the actual artifact...

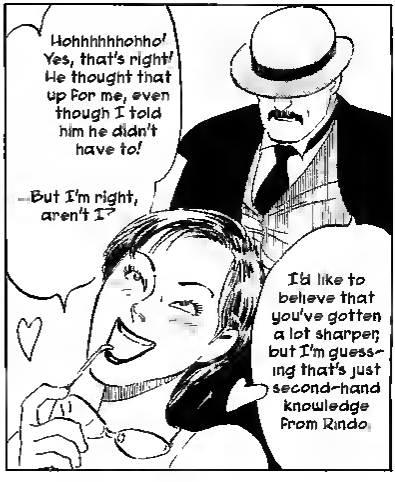
It was at this location where the remains of an aqueduct and artificial lake from Emperor S·imei's reign (7th Century CE) were discovered in 1999.

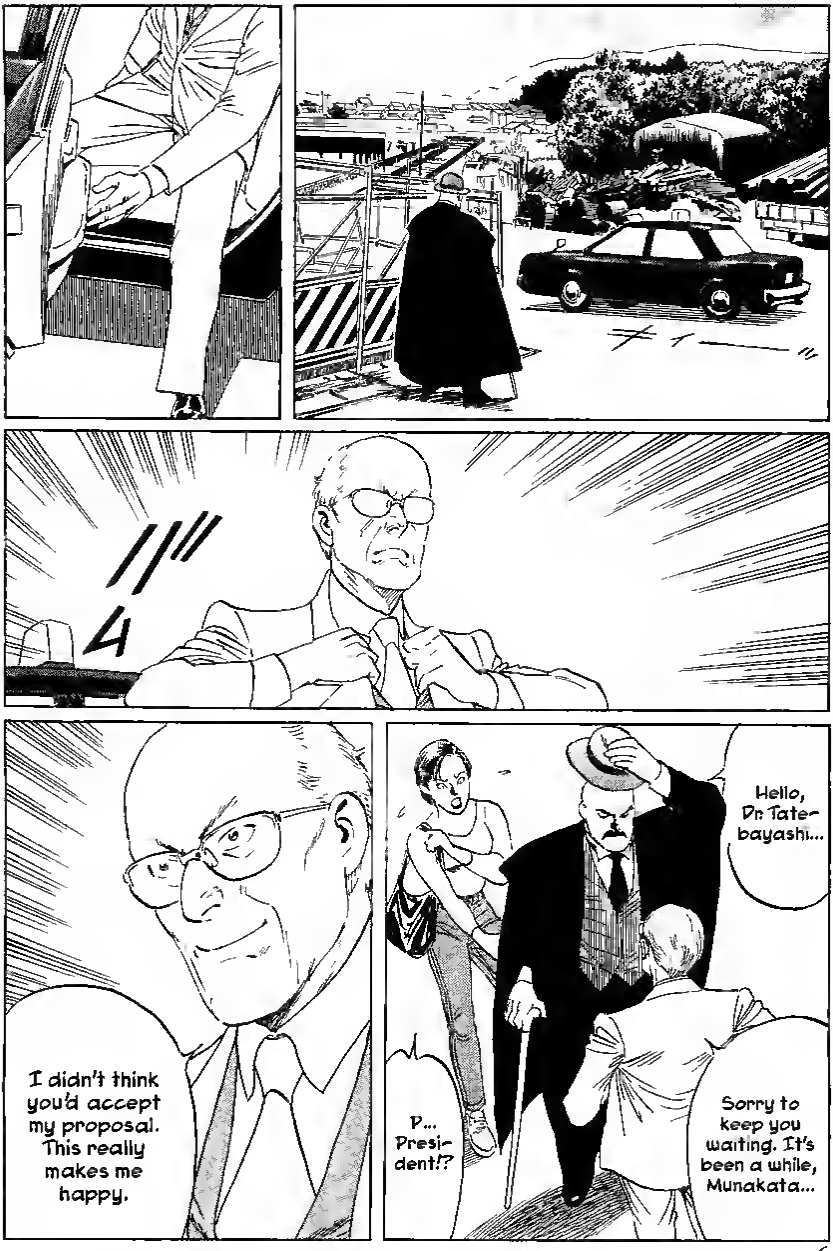
Among them, the over two-meter long turtle-shaped basin, constructed to catch and drain water, became a hot topic—
I'm going to figure out your intention for picking an Asuka turtle when our theme is dragons!
Oh...?
The Asuka are notable for the Takamatsuzuka and Kitora burial mounds!


Both of them have the "Four Gods" depicted on the Four walls of the stone chamber... the Black Tortoise in the North, the Vermillion Bird in the South, the White Tiger in the West, and the Azure Dragon in the East!


That's what I believe!
And this turtle is the Black Tortoise!
Which means there must be a stone Azure Dragon buried on the east side of these ruins!

Absolutely not.


Uohhhhhhohho! Yes, that's right! He thought that up for me, even though I told him he didn't have to!
—But I'm right, aren't I?
I'd like to believe that you've gotten a lot sharper, but I'm guessing that's just second-hand knowledge from Rindo.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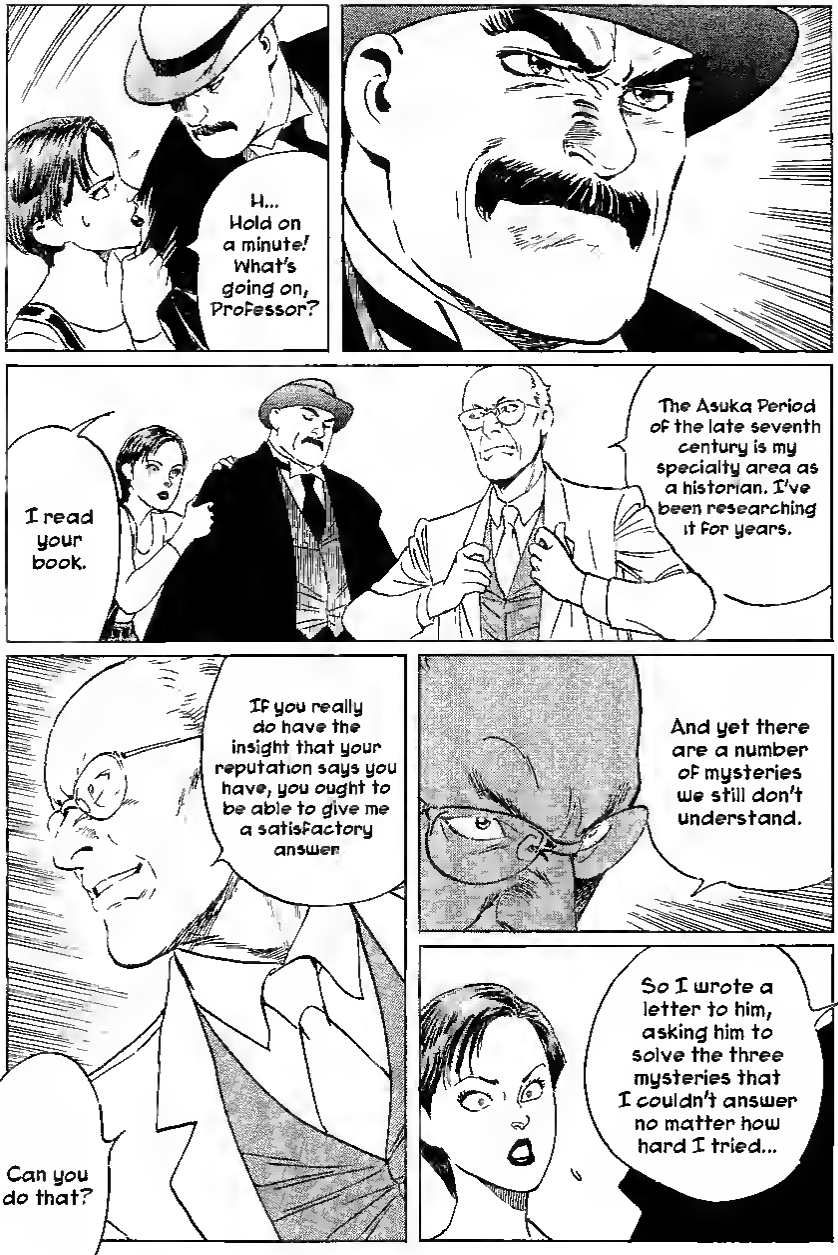
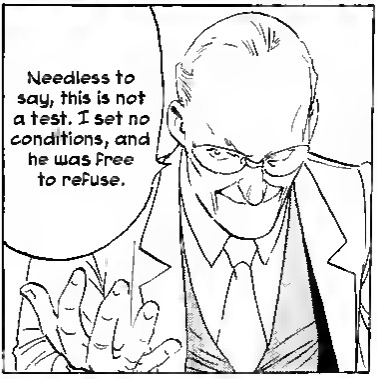
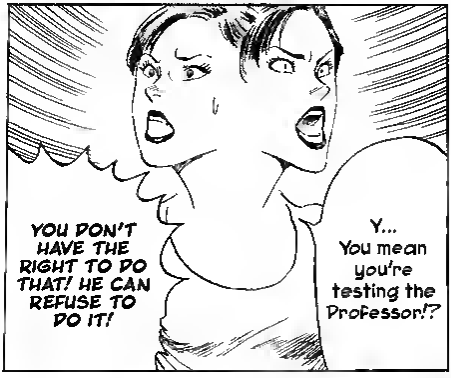
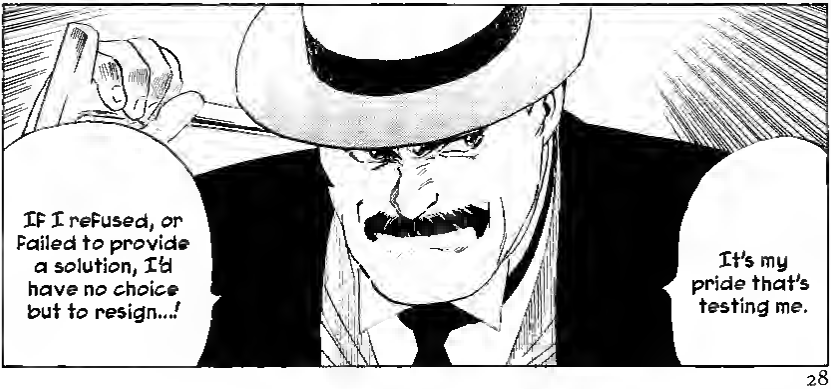
I didn't think you'd accept my proposal. This really makes me happy.
Hello, Dr. Tatebayashi...
P... President!?
Sorry to keep you waiting. It's been a while, Munakata...


H... Hold on a minute! What's going on, Professor?
I read your book.
The Asuka Period of the late seventh century is my specialty area as a historian. I've been researching it for years.
If you really do have the insight that your reputation says you have, you ought to be able to give me a satisfactory answer
Can you do that?
And yet there are a number of mysteries we still don't understand.
So I wrote a letter to him, asking him to solve the three mysteries that I couldn't answer no matter how hard I tried...

And if I fail, you'll have me resign as professor...!

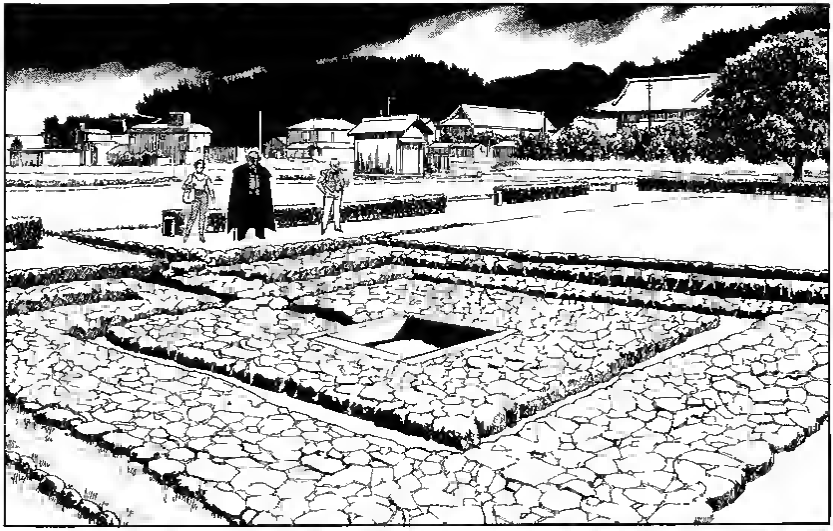

Needless to say, this is not a test. I set no conditions, and he was free to refuse.

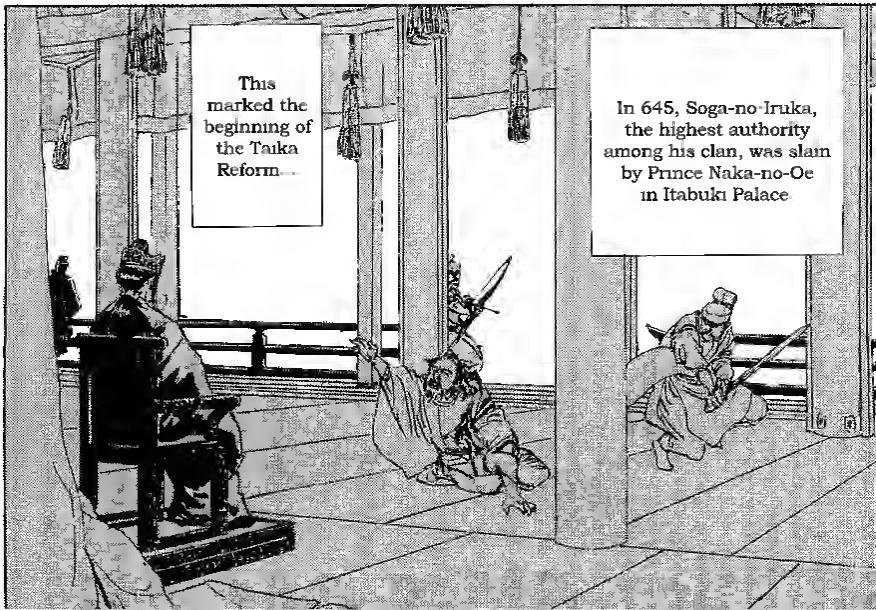

YOU DON'T HAVE THE RIGHT TO DO THAT! HE CAN REFUSE TO DO IT!
Y... You mean you're testing the Professor!?


IF I refused, or failed to provide a solution, I'd have no choice but to resign...!
It's my pride that's testing me.

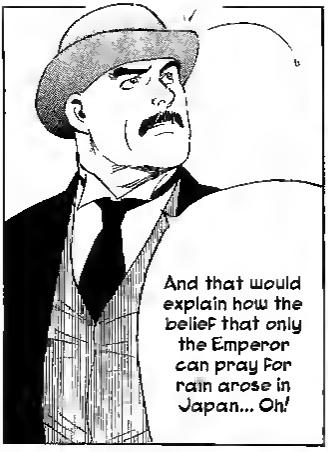
All the mysteries will be answered with the keyword "Dragon".
Yes, all three of your questions...
PRO-FES-SOR!!
Don't worry, I'll get the article done, too.
The dragon is the only imaginary animal in the entire Zodiac.
DRAGON !?
We'll see if we can catch a brief glimpse of this nonexistent dragon from that person's behavior...
That's why we're going to chase the "dragon" conceived by the imagination of a certain historical figure!

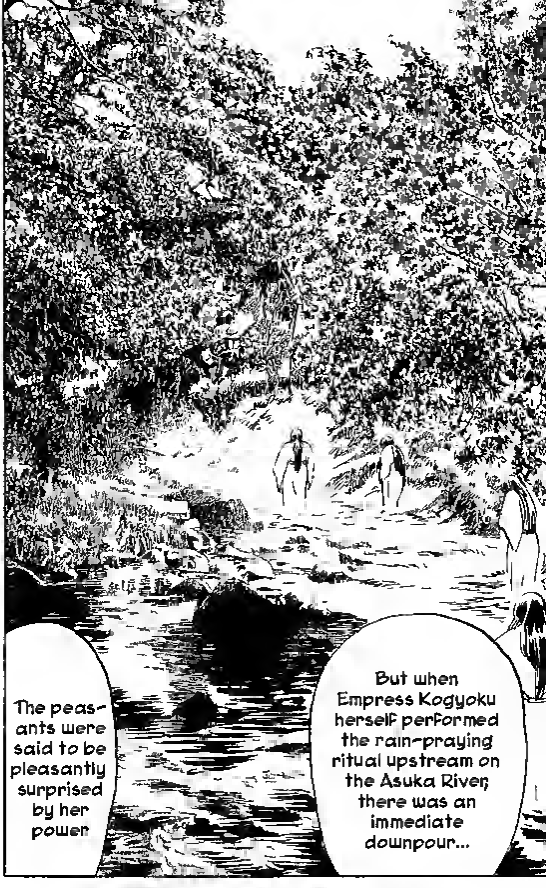
Asuka Village/Hill: Asuka Itabuki Palace Ruins

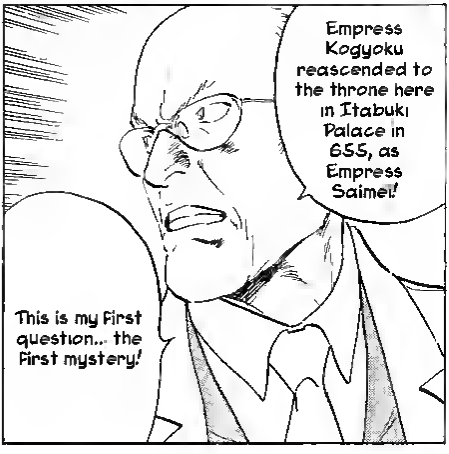



This marked the beginning of the Taika Reform...
In 645, Soga-no-Iruka, the highest authority among his clan, was slain by Prince Naka-no-Oe in Itabuki Palace

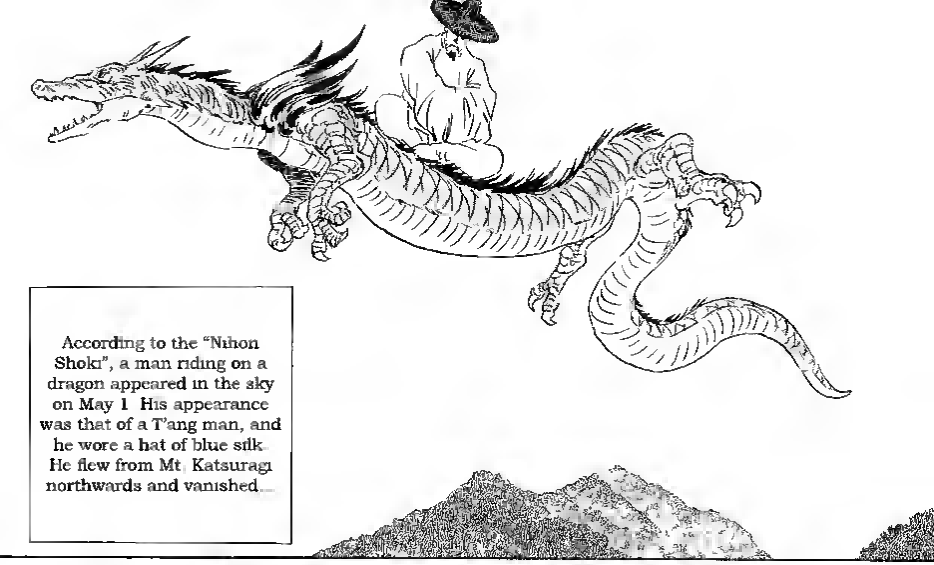
And this empress had yet another child, Prince Oama. He later became Emperor Temmu.
Prince Naka-no-Oe later became Emperor Tenji.
Empress Kogyoku, who was present during the incident, was his mother. She would later reign again as Empress Saimei.
You could very well say that Japan during the late seventh century was ruled by this family.
Incidentally, I hear that Empress Kogyoku was proficient at praying for rain.
There was a long drought one summer, so all the priests and Soga-no-Emishi began praying for rain, but to no avail...
Huh? ...Oh, yes, that's what it says in the "Nihon Shoki".

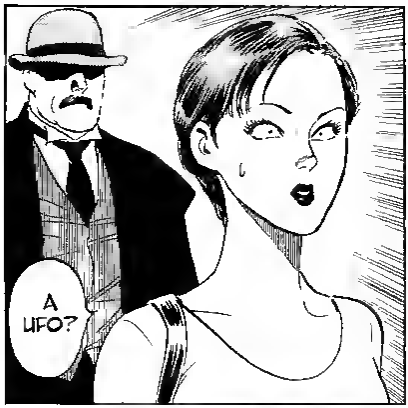

And that would explain how the belief that only the Emperor can pray for rain arose in Japan... Oh!


The peasants were said to be pleasantly surprised by her power
But when Empress Kogyoku herself performed the rain-praying ritual upstream on the Asuka River, there was an immediate downpour...


Empress Kogyoku reascended to the throne here in Itabuki Palace in 655, as Empress Saimei!
This is my first question... the first mystery!

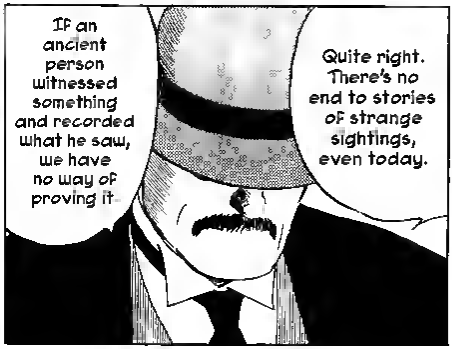
I'd like you to begin before this rain picks up, Munakata.

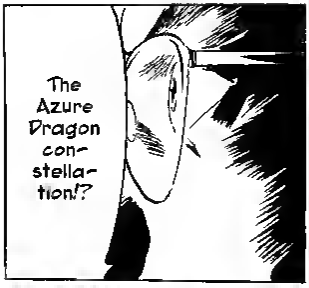

According to the "Nihon Shoki", a man riding on a dragon appeared in the sky on May 1. His appearance was that of a T'ang man, and he wore a hat of blue silk. He flew from Mt. Katsuragi northwards and vanished.

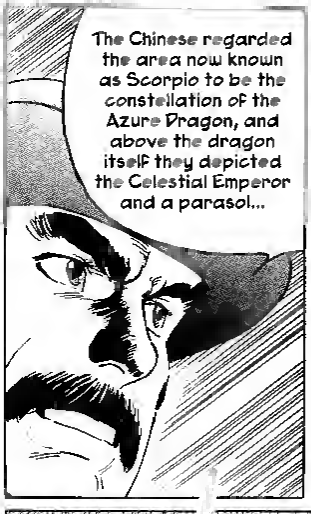

A UFO?

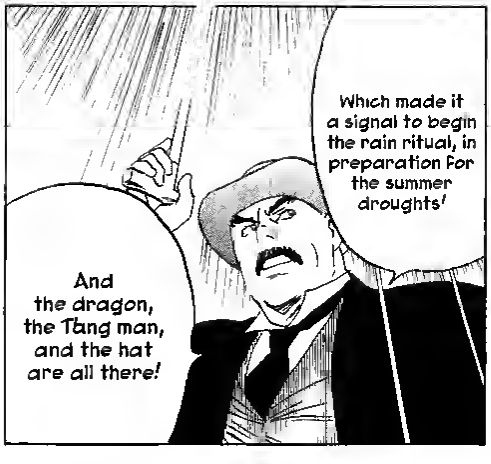
What was this... or what did it signify!?
This mysterious text, recorded so casually following Saimei's enthronement, has been a mystery for centuries.

But what if that wasn't the case...?

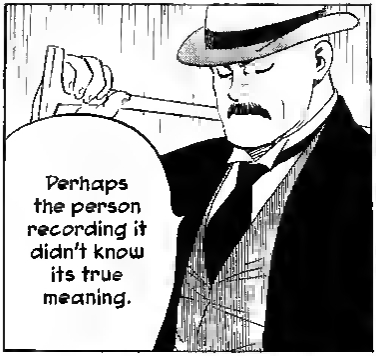

If an ancient person witnessed something and recorded what he saw, we have no way of proving it.
Quite right. There's no end to stories of strange sightings, even today.

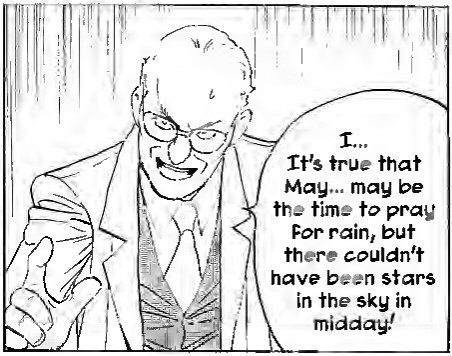

The Azure Dragon constellation!?

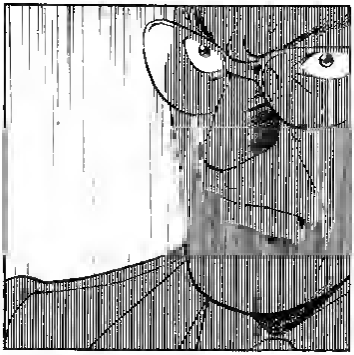

The Chinese regarded the area now known as Scorpio to be the constellation of the Azure Dragon, and above the dragon itself they depicted the Celestial Emperor and a parasol...

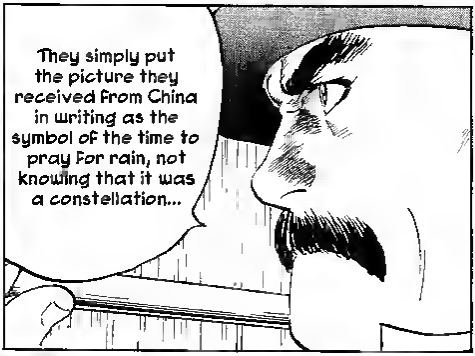

Which made it a signal to begin the rain ritual, in preparation for the summer droughts!
And the dragon, the Tang man, and the hat are all there!

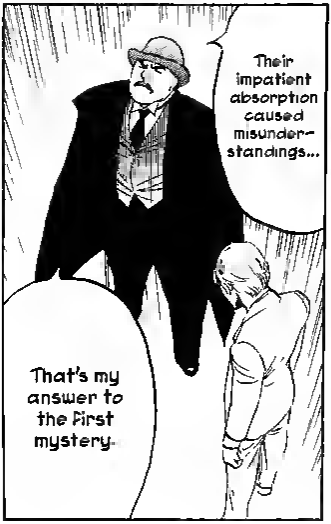
The ancient Chinese chronicle "Zuo Zhuan" says that the festival to pray for rain would be held when this dragon constellation first appeared at twilight...

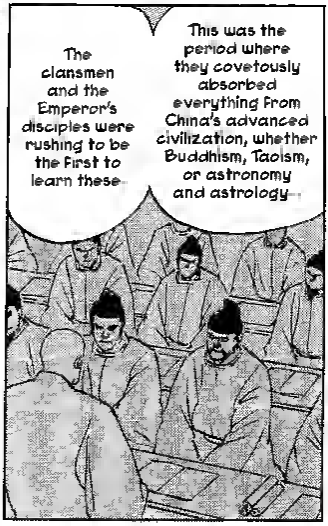

Perhaps the person recording it didn't know its true meaning.

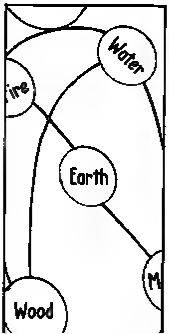

I... It's true that May... may be the time to pray for rain, but there couldn't have been stars in the sky in midday!

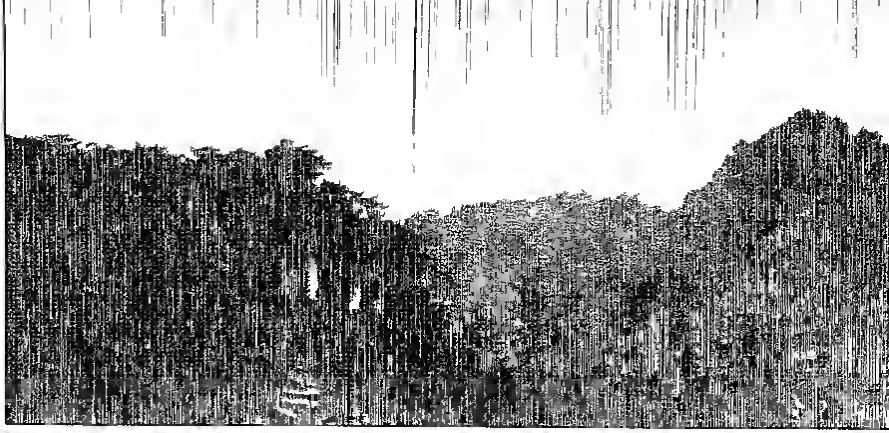


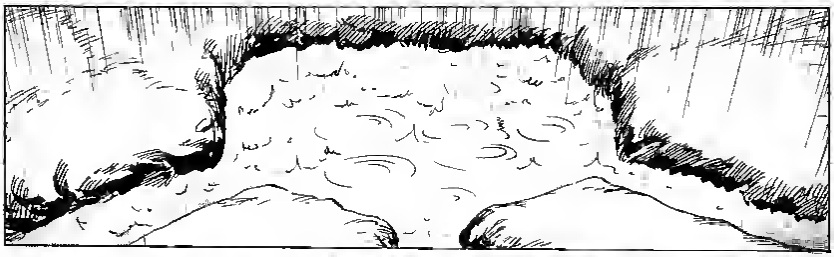

They simply put the picture they received from China in writing as the symbol of the time to pray for rain, not knowing that it was a constellation...

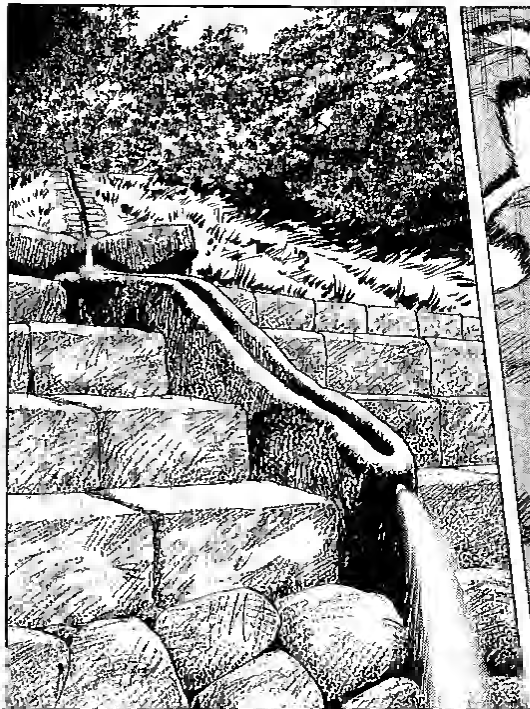

Their impatient absorption caused misunderstandings...
That's my answer to the first mystery.

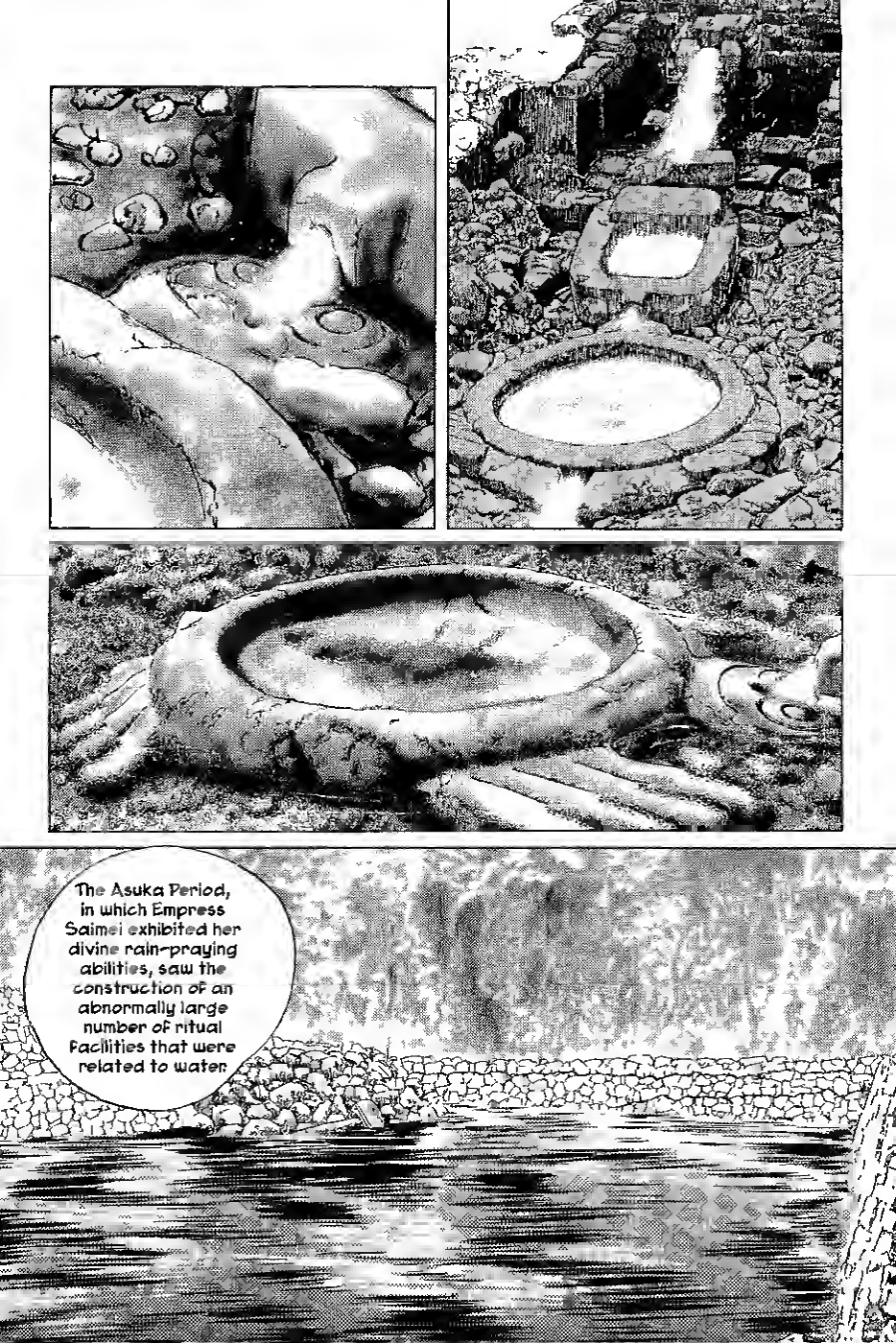

The clansmen and the Emperor's disciples were rushing to be the first to learn these...
This was the period where they covetously absorbed everything from China's advanced civilization, whether Buddhism, Taoism, or astronomy and astrology...

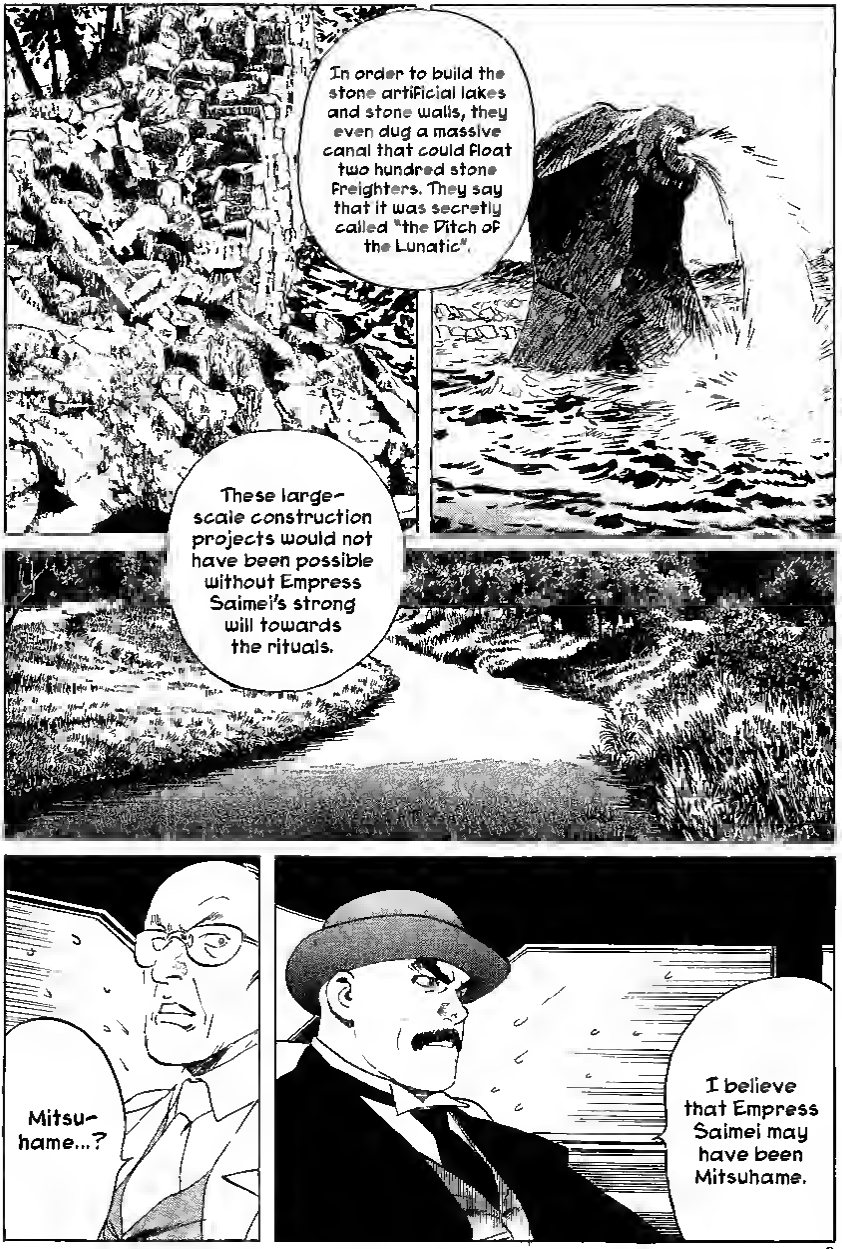

Water
Fire
Earth
Wood





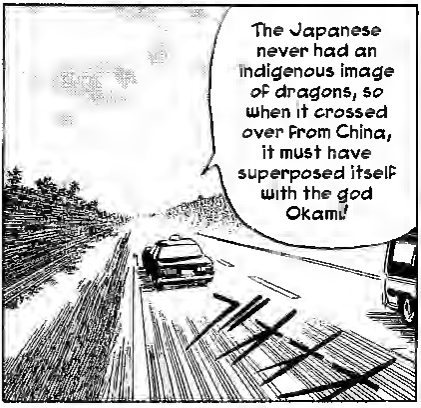



The Asuka Period, in which Empress Saimei exhibited her divine rain-praying abilities, saw the construction of an abnormally large number of ritual facilities that were related to water.

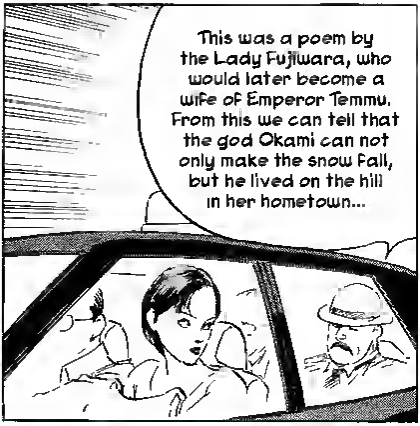

In order to build the stone artificial lakes and stone walls, they even dug a massive canal that could float two hundred stone freighters. They say that it was secretly called "the Ditch of the Lunatic".
These large-scale construction projects would not have been possible without Empress Saimei's strong will towards the rituals.
Mitsu-hame...?
I believe that Empress Saimei may have been Mitsuhame.

"Okami" is written with the character "Rei"...
This is pronounced "Ling" in Chinese. It's a character related to both praying for rain and dragons.

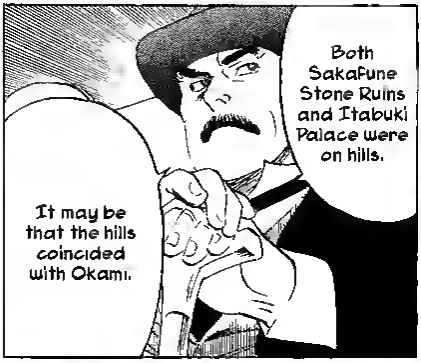
In ancient Japan, the gods of water were a couple called "Okami" and "Mitsuhame".
"Okami" was said to have a serpent's form, and "Mitsuhame" was either his wife, or a medium in his service.

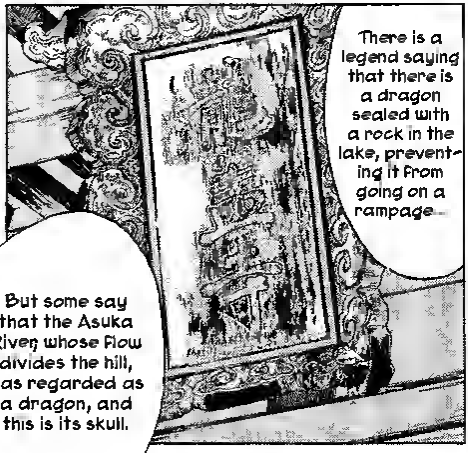

The Japanese never had an indigenous image of dragons, so when it crossed over from China, it must have superposed itself with the god Okami!

If Okami is a dragon, this would make Mitsuhame the Dragon God's wife... The medium that serves him in the water rituals!


This was a poem by the Lady Fujiwara, who would later become a wife of Emperor Temmu. From this we can tell that the god Okami can not only make the snow fall, but he lived on the hill in her hometown...

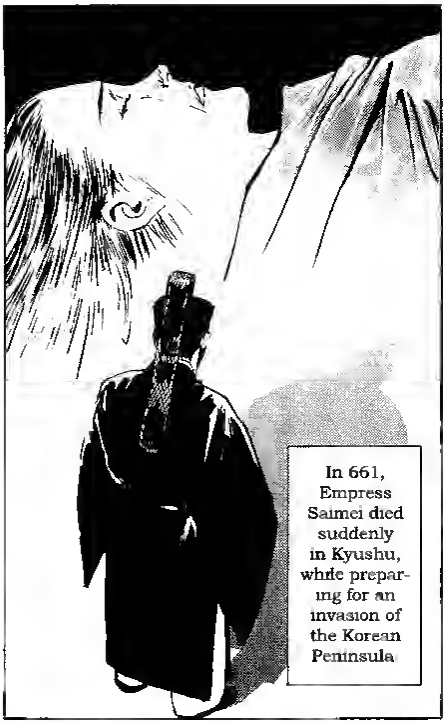
I spake to Okami on my hill, and of the falling snow he took but a fragment to scatter on thy village.
"The Man'yoshu"

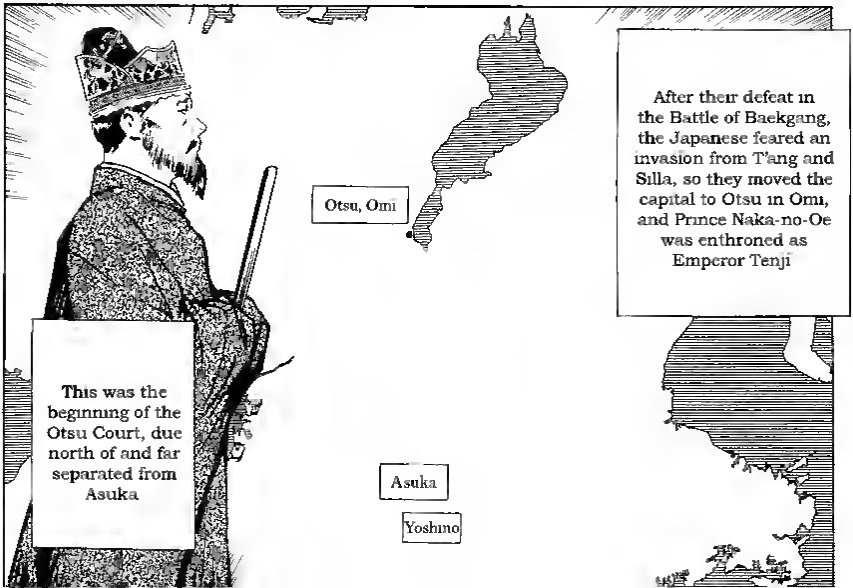


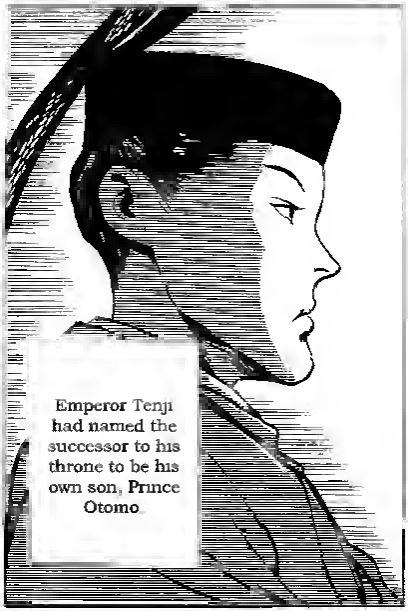

There is a legend saying that there is a dragon sealed with a rock in the lake, preventing it from going on a rampage...
But some say that the Asuka River, whose flow divides the hill, was regarded as a dragon, and this is its skull.

And further downstream, it reaches Tatsuta and leaves for the sea.
Furthermore, the Asuka River's source can be traced to Mt. Ryumon in the East...
Hill
Though divided, the hill must have been regarded as a sacred place, hence there must have been legends of mediums performing rituals here such as the prayer for rain.
If the Asuka River itself is a symbol of the dragon, then it all fits together Heheh...
Ryumo

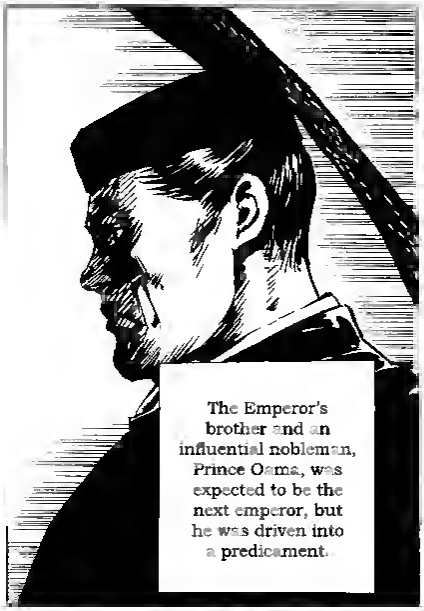
I know, and it's not even cherry blossom season... But the professor won't listen to that kind of reason.
You're going to Yoshino next? I don't think you'll get much of a good view in this weather...
It's almost like he can actually see the dragon...


In 661, Empress Saimei died suddenly in Kyushu, while preparing for an invasion of the Korean Peninsula

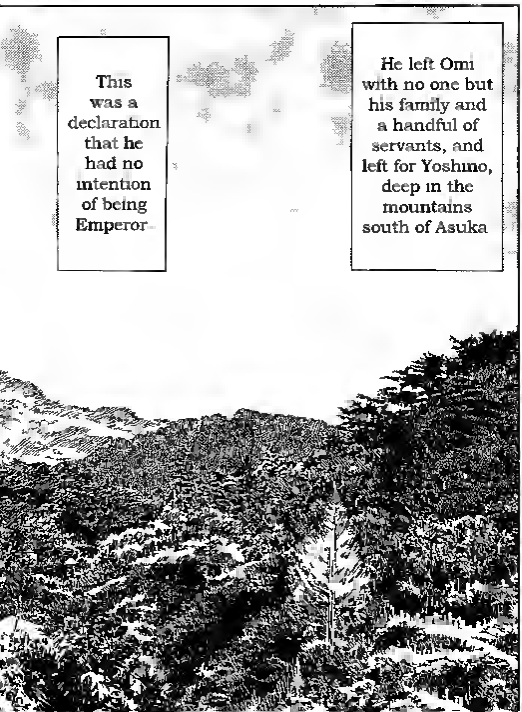

Otsu, Omi
After their defeat in the Battle of Baekgang, the Japanese feared an invasion from T'ang and Silla, so they moved the capital to Otsu in Omi, and Prince Naka-no-Oe was enthroned as Emperor Tenji
This was the beginning of the Otsu Court, due north of and far separated from Asuka
Asuka
Yoshino



Emperor Tenji had named the successor to his throne to be his own son, Prince Otomo.

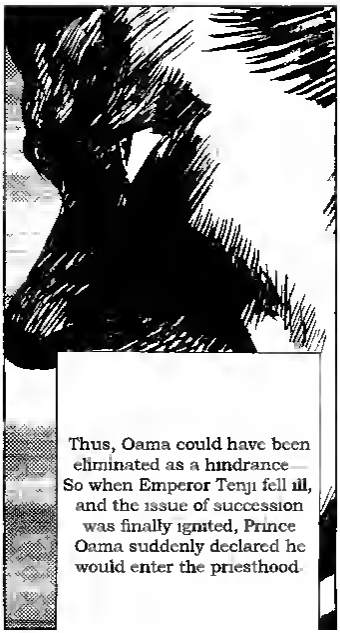


The Emperor's brother and an influential nobleman, Prince Oama, was expected to be the next emperor, but he was driven into a predicament.

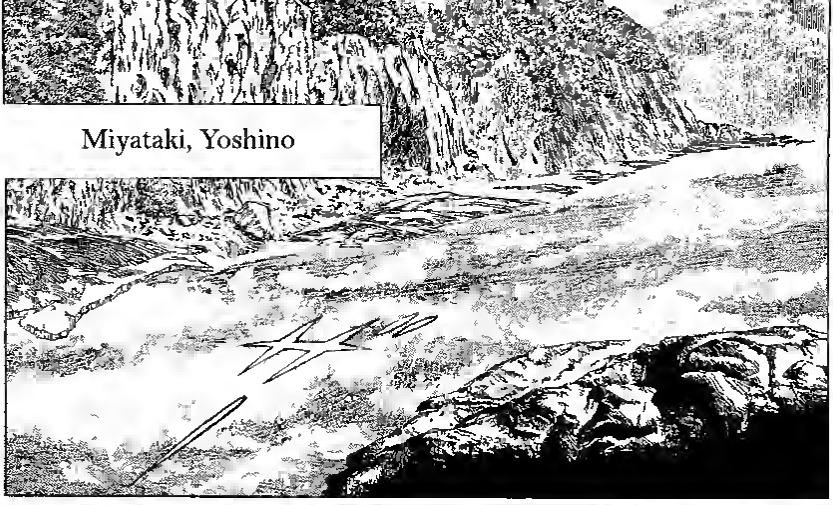


This was a declaration that he had no intention of being Emperor.

He left Omi with no one but his family and a handful of servants, and left for Yoshino, deep in the mountains south of Asuka.

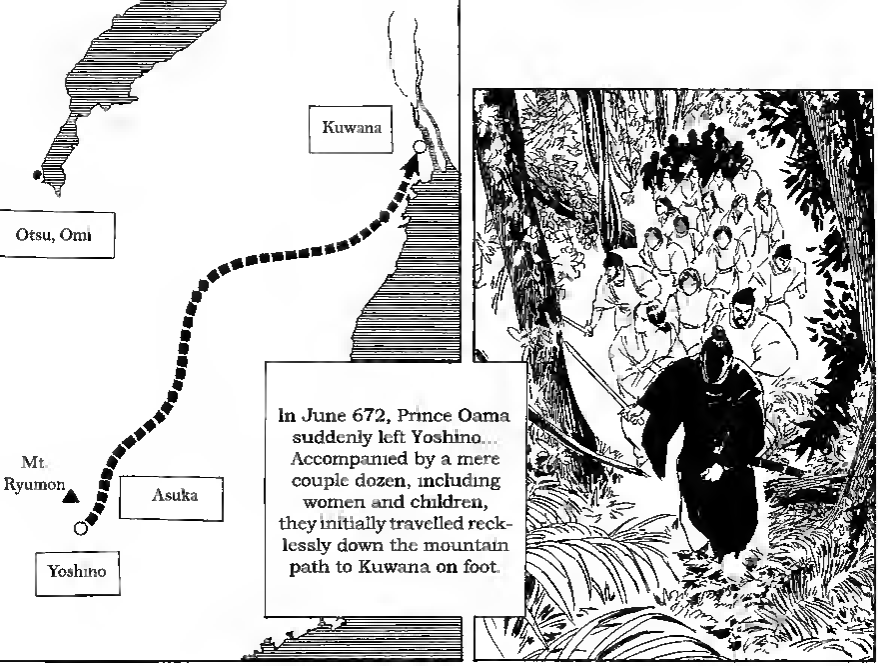


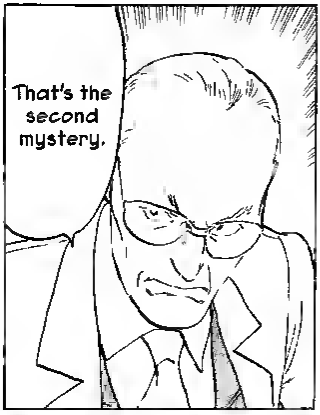
Thus, Oama could have been eliminated as a hindrance. So when Emperor Tenji fell ill, and the issue of succession was finally ignited, Prince Oama suddenly declared he would enter the priesthood.

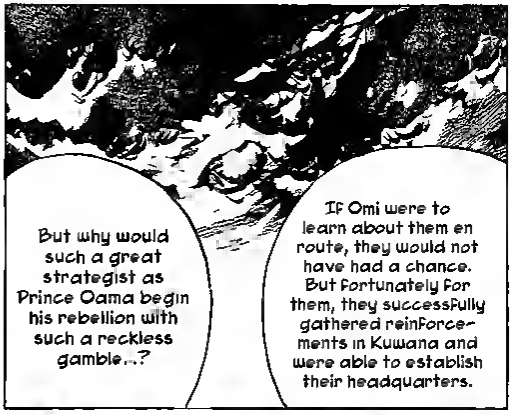

Miyataki, Yoshino

But after Emperor Tenji's death, Prince Oama raised an army from Yoshino...

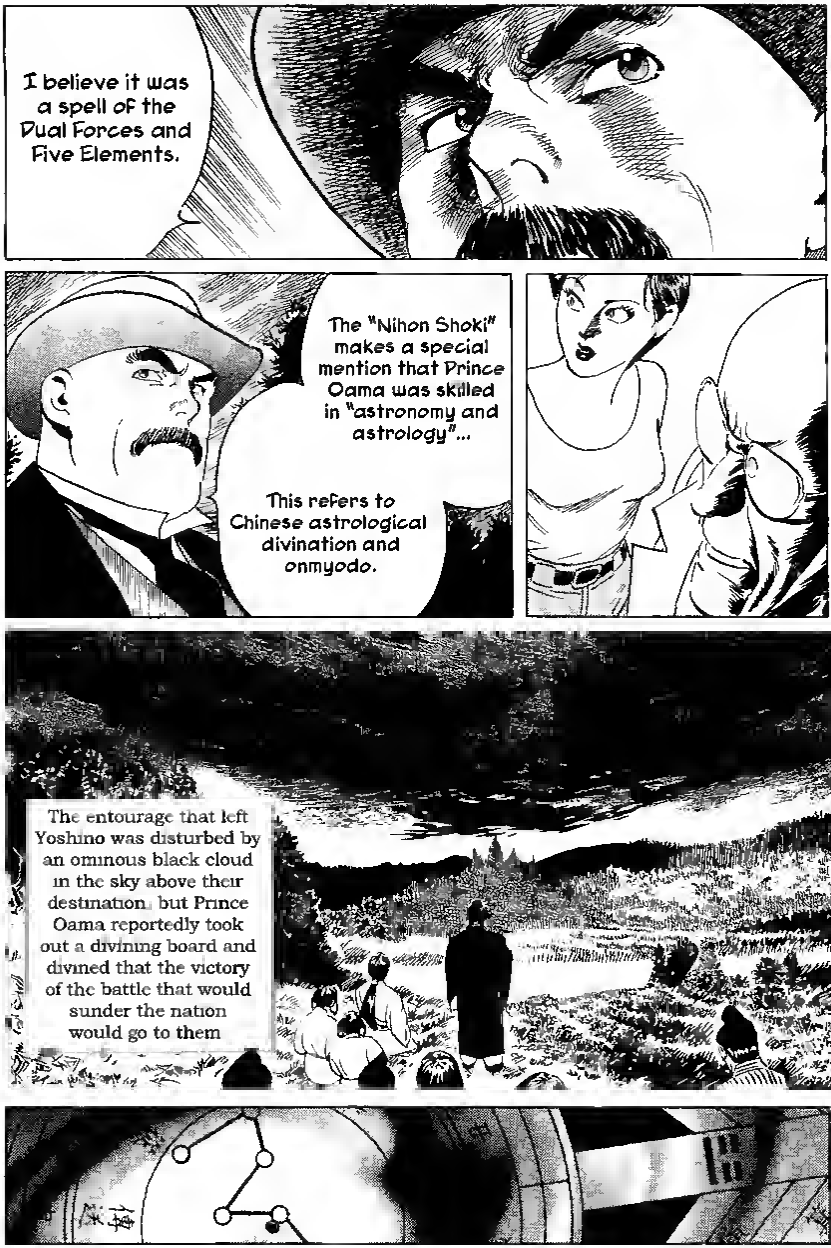
The problem here is how he raised that army.
Where Prince Otomo of Omi, leading the Court Army, was faced by Prince Oama with his handful of forces...
That was the beginning of the Jinshin Rebellion... the greatest rebellion of ancient Japan!

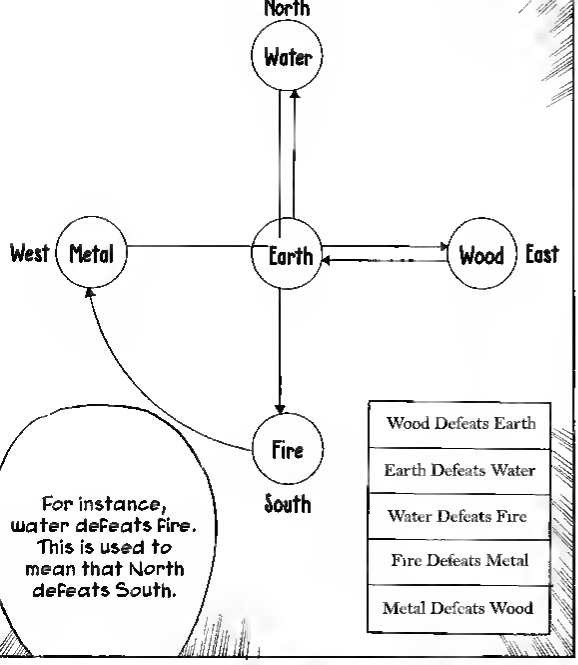

Kuwana
Otsu, Omi
Mt. Ryumon
Asuka
Yoshino
In June 672, Prince Oama suddenly left Yoshino... Accompanied by a mere couple dozen, including women and children, they initially travelled recklessly down the mountain path to Kuwana on foot.

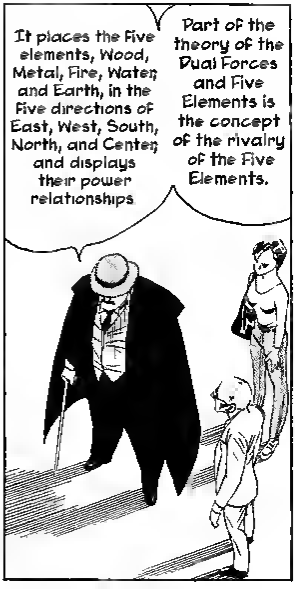

That's the second mystery.


But why would such a great strategist as Prince Oama begin his rebellion with such a reckless gamble...?
If Omi were to learn about them en route, they would not have had a chance. But fortunately for them, they successfully gathered reinforcements in Kuwana and were able to establish their headquarters.

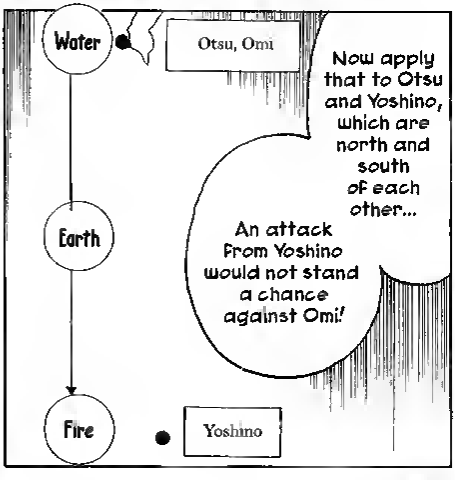
He may have been able to amass an army in the safety of Yoshino...
I see...


I believe it was a spell of the Dual Forces and Five Elements.
The "Nihon Shoki" makes a special mention that Prince Oama was skilled in "astronomy and astrology"...
This refers to Chinese astrological divination and onmyodo.
The entourage that left Yoshino was disturbed by an ominous black cloud in the sky above their destination, but Prince Oama reportedly took out a divining board and divined that the victory of the battle that would sunder the nation would go to them

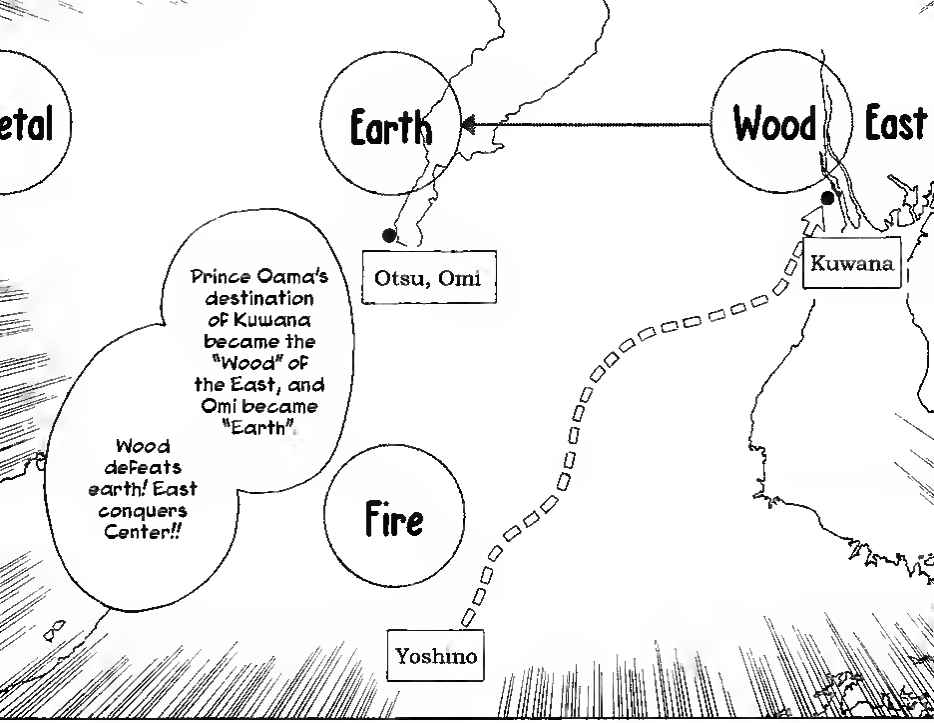

North
Water
West
Metal
Earth
Wood
East
Fire
South
For instance, water defeats fire. This is used to mean that North defeats South.
Wood Defeats Earth
Earth Defeats Water
Water Defeats Fire
Fire Defeats Metal
Metal Defeats Wood

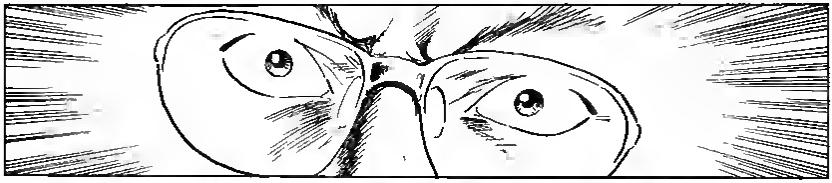

It places the Five elements, Wood, Metal, Fire, Water, and Earth, in the Five directions of East, West, South, North, and Center, and displays their power relationships.
Part of the theory of the Dual Forces and Five Elements is the concept of the rivalry of the Five Elements.

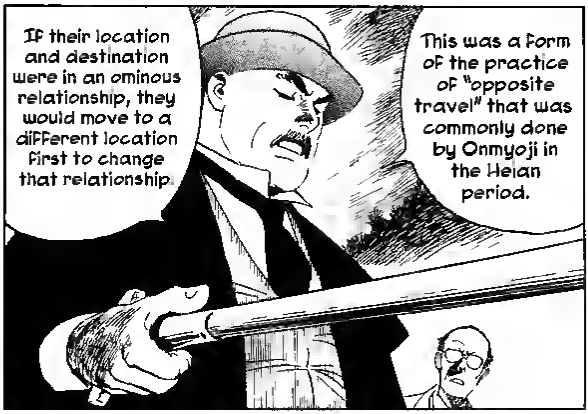
they were to leave Yoshino, and set up camp due east of Omi...
But what if...


Water
Otsu, Omi
Earth
Fire
Yoshino
Now apply that to Otsu and Yoshino, which are north and south of each other...
An attack from Yoshino would not stand a chance against Omi!

Otsu, Omi
Kuwana

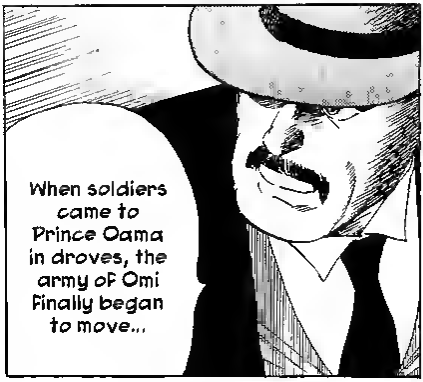

etal
Earth
Wood
East
Otsu, Omi
Kuwana
Prince Oama's destination of Kuwana became the "Wood" of the East, and Omi became "Earth".
Wood defeats earth! East conquers Center!!
Fire
Yoshino

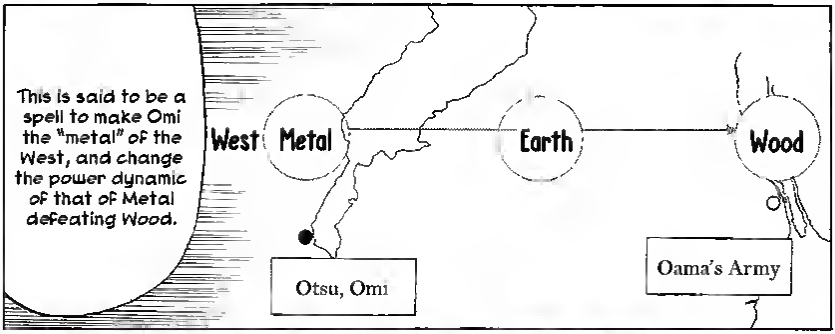



If their location and destination were in an ominous relationship, they would move to a different location first to change that relationship.
This was a form of the practice of "opposite travel" that was commonly done by Onmyoji in the Heian period.

ゴゴゴゴゴゴ
THIS WAS UNDOUBTEDLY THE GAMBLE OF A LIFETIME... TO WREST AWAY THE IMPERIAL THRONE...!
D... PROFES-SOR, I THINK WE SHOULD GET BACK TO THE CAR...
.....

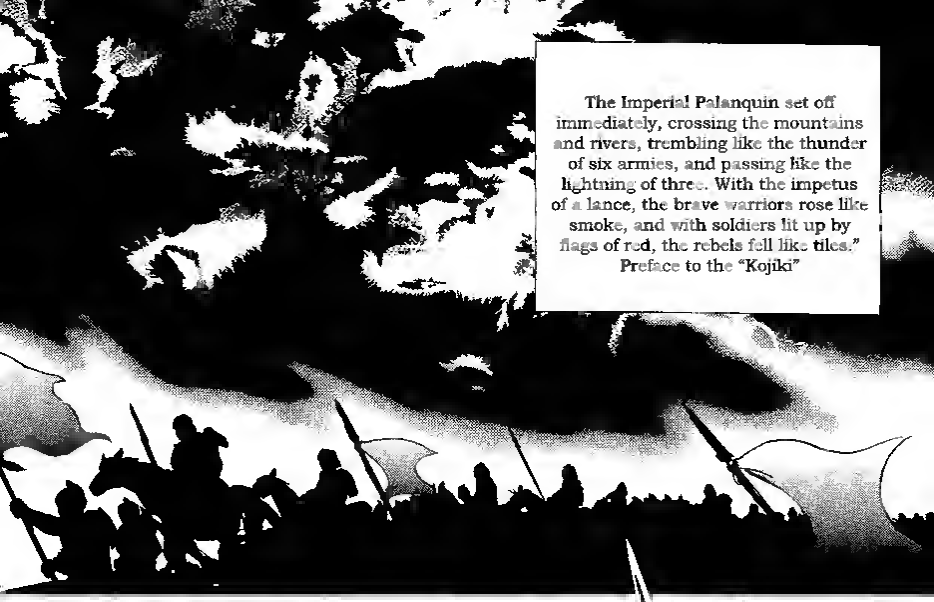
The "Nihon Shoki" says that a part of the Omi army would use "metal" as their password.
Metal...

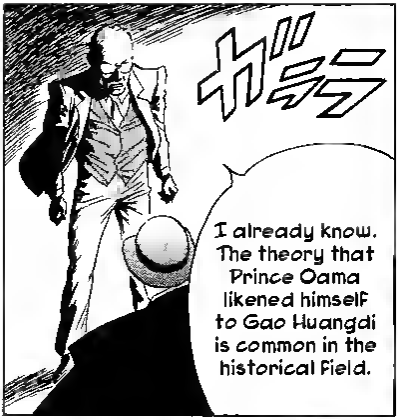

When soldiers came to Prince Oama in droves, the army of Omi Finally began to move...


This is said to be a spell to make Omi the "metal" of the West, and change the power dynamic of that of Metal defeating Wood.
West
Metal
Earth
Wood
Otsu, Omi
Oama's Army

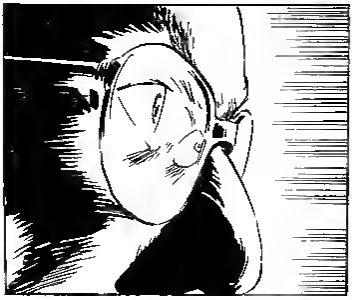
EEP...

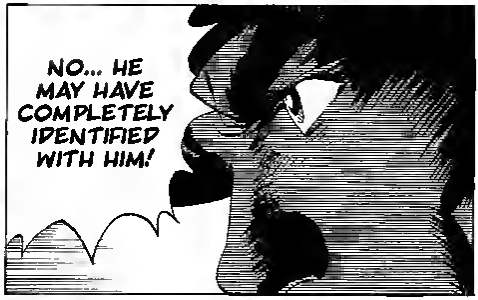
But it was too late.


The Imperial Palanquin set off immediately, crossing the mountains and rivers, trembling like the thunder of six armies, and passing like the lightning of three. With the impetus of a lance, the brave warriors rose like smoke, and with soldiers lit up by flags of red, the rebels fell like tiles."
Preface to the "Kojiki"


カツラ
I already know. The theory that Prince Oama likened himself to Gao Huangdi is common in the historical field.

It seems like he was emulating the Han Emperor Gao Huangdi's defeat of the Qin Empire with red flags in his defeat of the Omi Court.
Oama's army bore red flags.



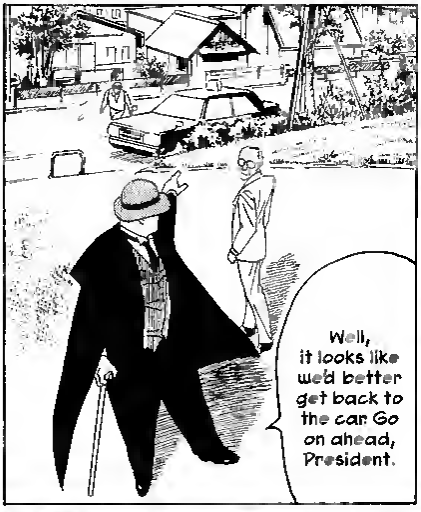

NO... HE MAY HAVE COMPLETELY IDENTIFIED WITH HIM!

SINCE GAO HUANGDI WAS THE CHILD OF A DRAGON, HE WAS THUS DESTINED TO BECOME THE EMPEROR!
LEGEND HAS IT THAT GAO HUANGDI'S MOTHER CONSORTED WITH A DRAGON ON THE RIVERSIDE.
THAT WOULD MAKE HER CHILD, PRINCE OAMA...
EMPRESS SAIMEI WAS A MEDIUM IN THE SERVICE OF THE DRAGON GOD... SHE WAS HIS SO-CALLED WIFE MITSUHAME!
PRO-FES-SOR!
HE MAY HAVE LIVED ON BY CLINGING TO HIS IMAGINATION...
THIS WAS THE WORLD OF ANCIENT ROYALTY, WHEN NO ONE KNEW WHO WOULD CLAIM THE THRONE AND WHO WOULD BE KILLED.

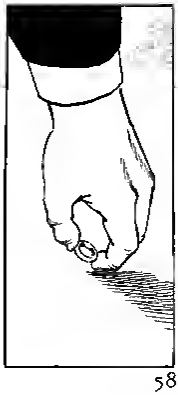
THAT HE, LIKE GAO HUANGDI, WAS THE CHILD OF A DRAGON!
THAT HE WAS DESTINED TO BE THE EMPEROR!!
THAT THE EAST WAS THE DIRECTION OF THE AZURE DRAGON!
AND WHEN HE WON HIS BET, HE TRULY BELIEVED WITH ALL HIS BEING...

WE HAVE THE PROTECTION OF THE DRAGON GOD!
THEN LIKE RAGING BILLOWS, OAMA'S ARMY ASSAULTED OTSU FROM BOTH SHORES OF LAKE BIWA!
Otsu, Omi
Kuwana
Yoshino
Oama Army's Course during the Jinshin Rebellion

Kuwana
Otsu, Omi
Yoshino


Well, it looks like we'd better get back to the car Go on ahead, President.

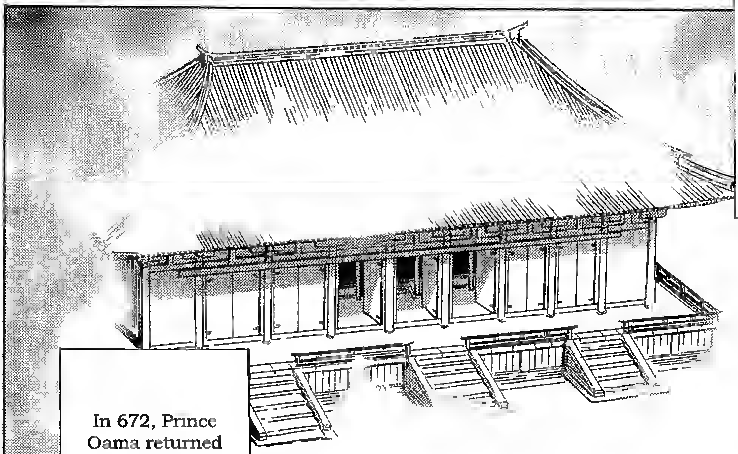
EH ? EH ?



She's alright. She'll be awake by dinner...
I...IS SHE HURT!?
Zzz...
Phew... I feel like I'm finally back in Japan now.

As my lord is in nature a god, his earthly dwelling is above the thunder resounding in the clouds.
"Man'yoshu" Kakinomoto-no-Hitomaro

The Jinshin Rebellion ended with Prince Otomo's suicide and the destruction of the Omi Court



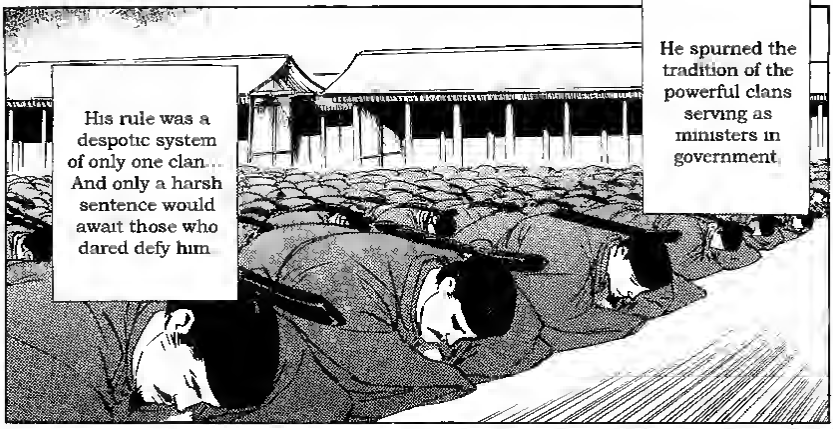
In 672, Prince Oama returned the court to Asuka, and was enthroned

as the Living God, Emperor Temmu

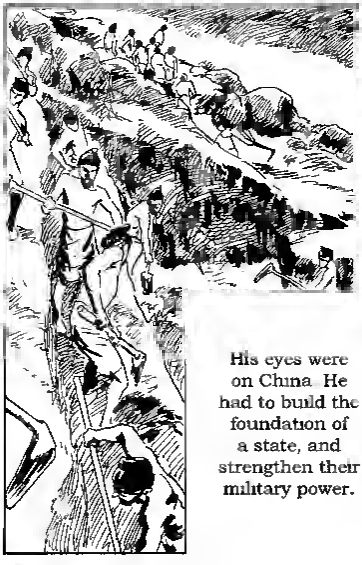
With his divine maneuvers and his intense self-confidence, the people came to fear him

His rule was even greater than the Yellow Emperor of China, and his virtue was beyond King Wen of Zhou. He rightly used the twin forces of Yin and Yang, and cycled the Five Elements of Wood, Metal, Fire, Water, and Earth in their proper order...

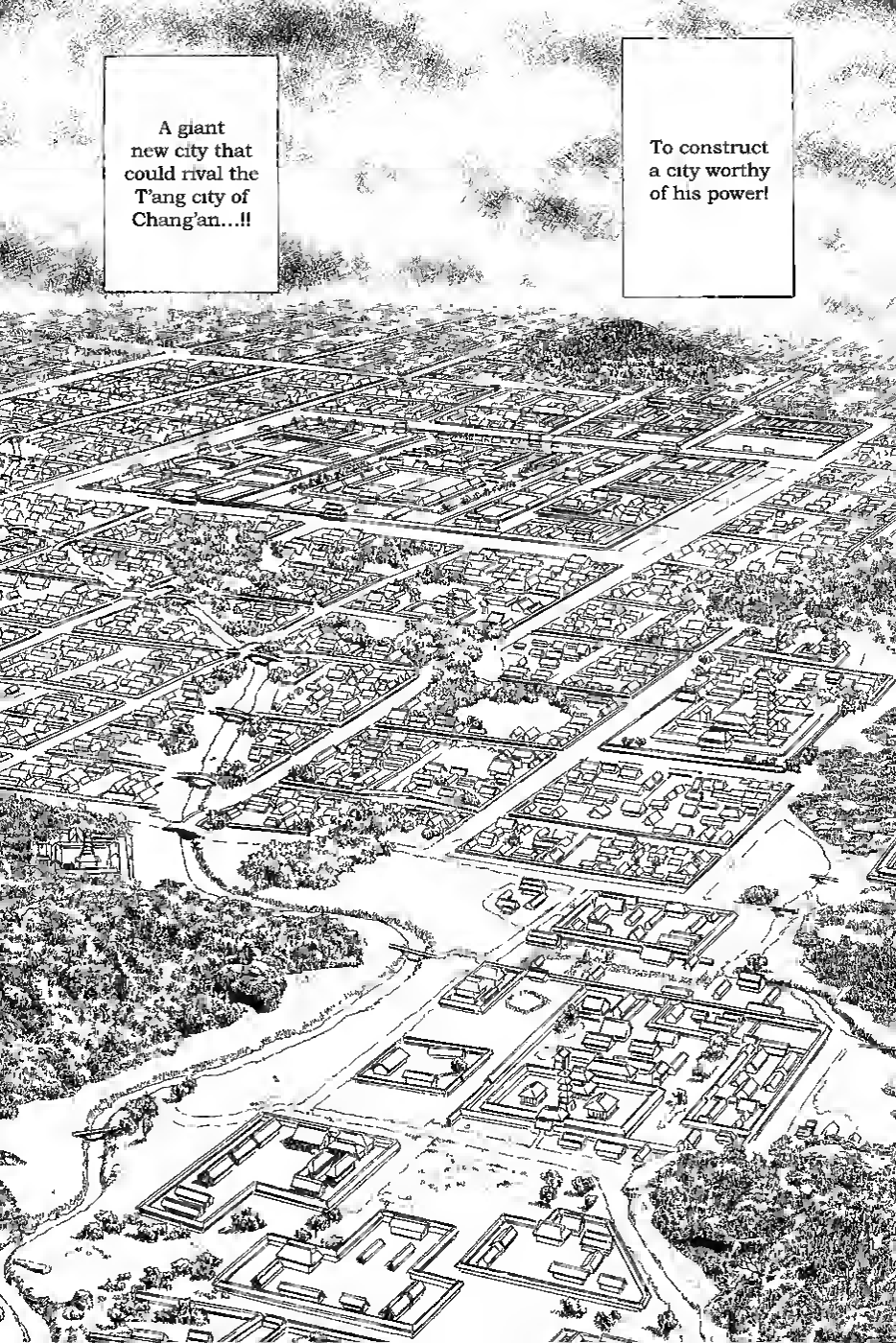
The preface to the "Kojiki" praises Temmu's administration as follows...


His rule was a despotic system of only one clan... And only a harsh sentence would await those who dared defy him.
He spurned the tradition of the powerful clans serving as ministers in government.

He also imitated the "Historical Records" and aided in the compilation of a national history.
This is why the preface to the "Kojiki" is dedicated to Emperor Temmu.
古事記


His eyes were on China. He had to build the foundation of a state, and strengthen their military power.

And he had one other enterprise—

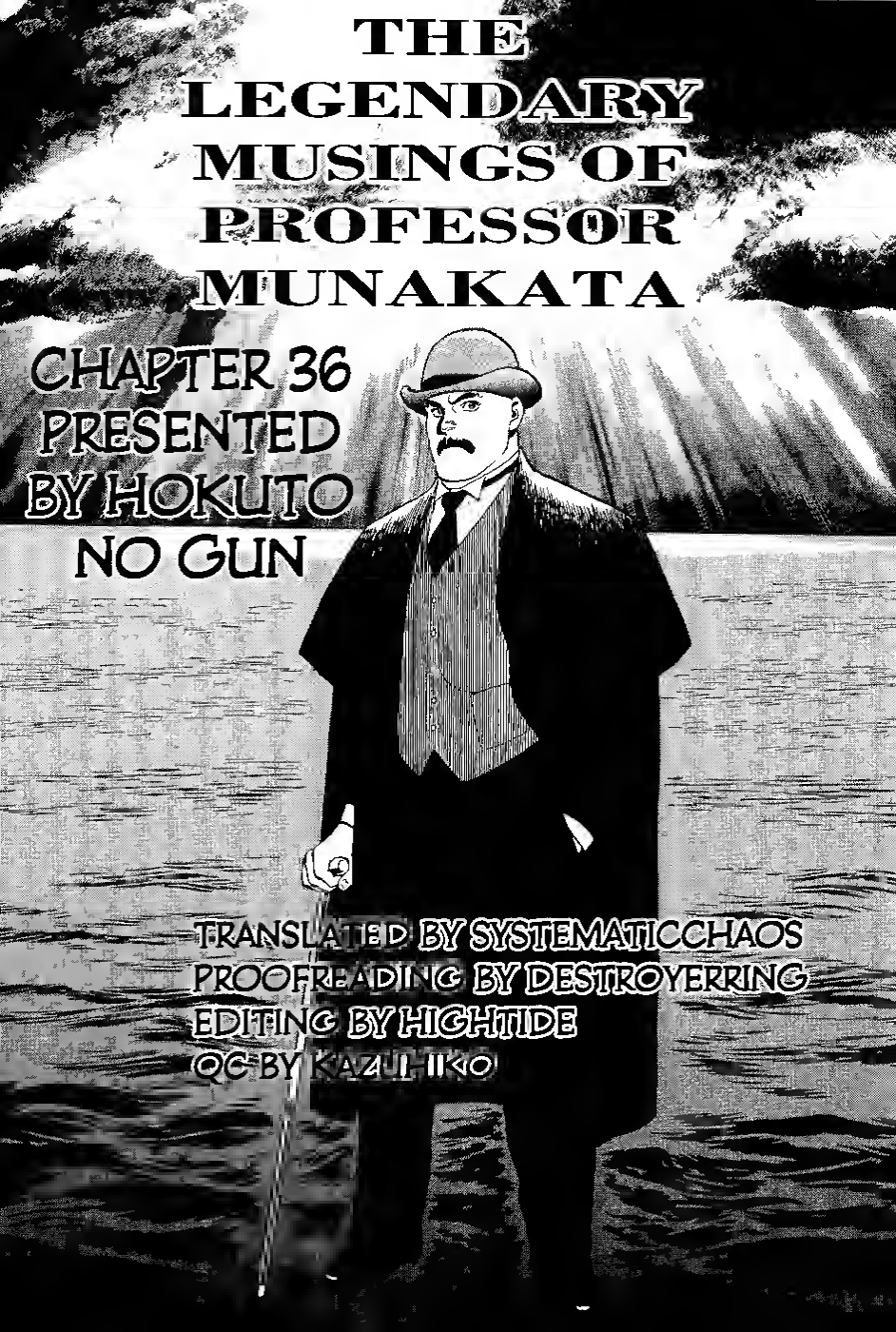

A giant new city that could rival the T'ang city of Chang'an...!!
To construct a city worthy of his power!

That's the place that relates to the third mystery!
Driver, go back to Asuka and take us to the "Fujiwara Palace Ruins"!
Yes, sir.

THE LEGENDARY MUSINGS OF PROFESSOR MUNAKATA

CHAPTER 36

PRESENTED BY HOKUTO NO GUN



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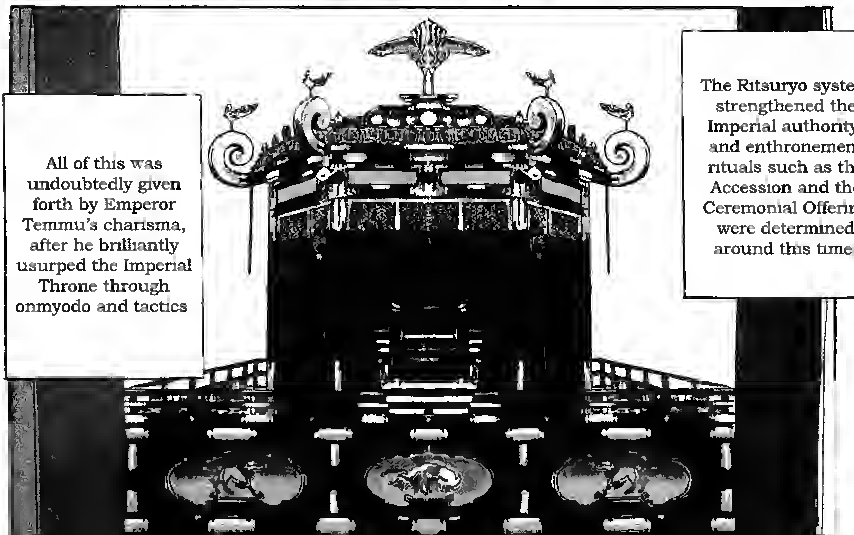
THE DRAGON GOD'S CITY • PART TWO

file.37

Japanese mythology was settled in the compilation of the "Kojiki" and "Nihon Shoki"...

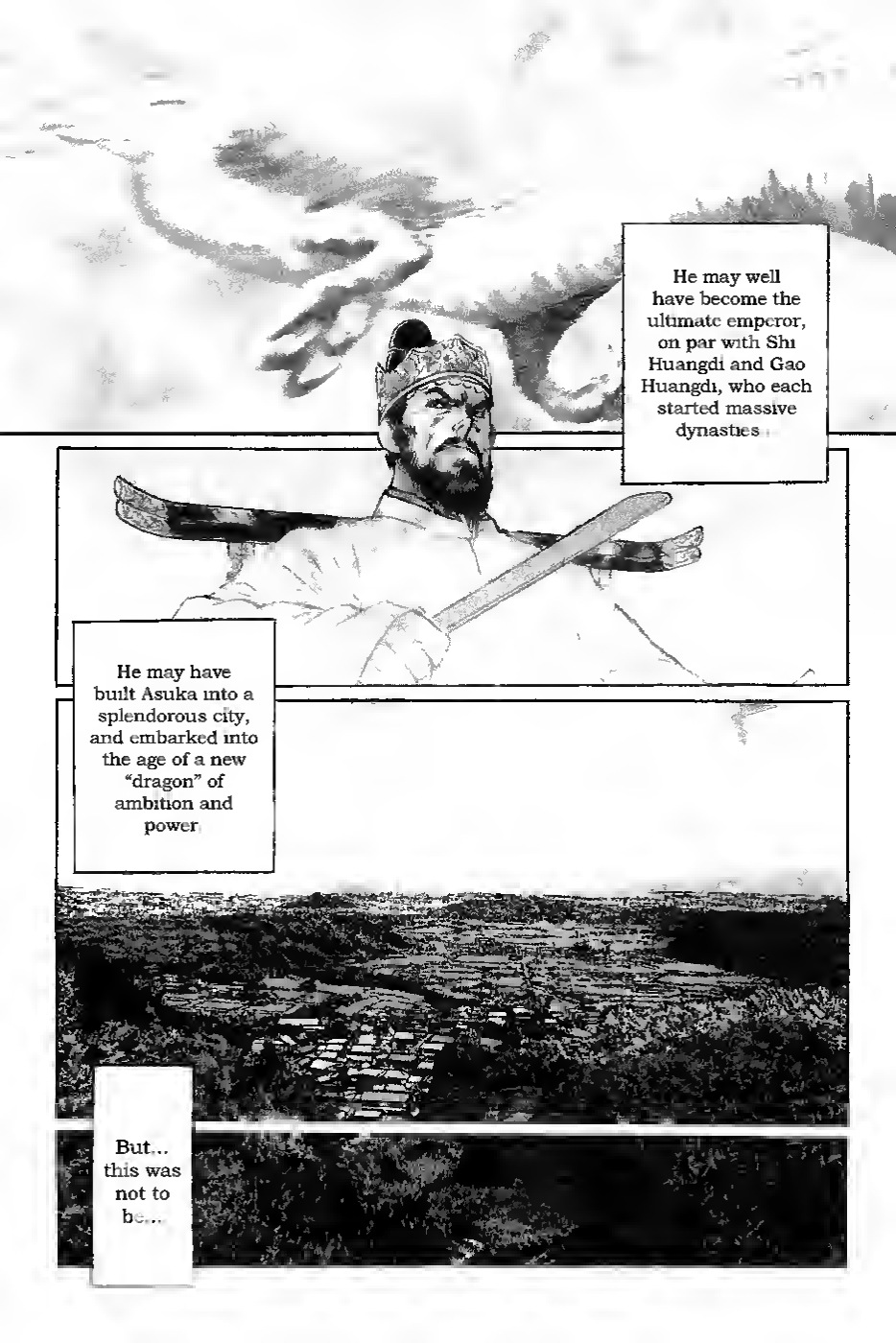
The Great God Amaterasu was regarded as the Imperial Ancestor, giving rise to the concept that the Emperor was a living god

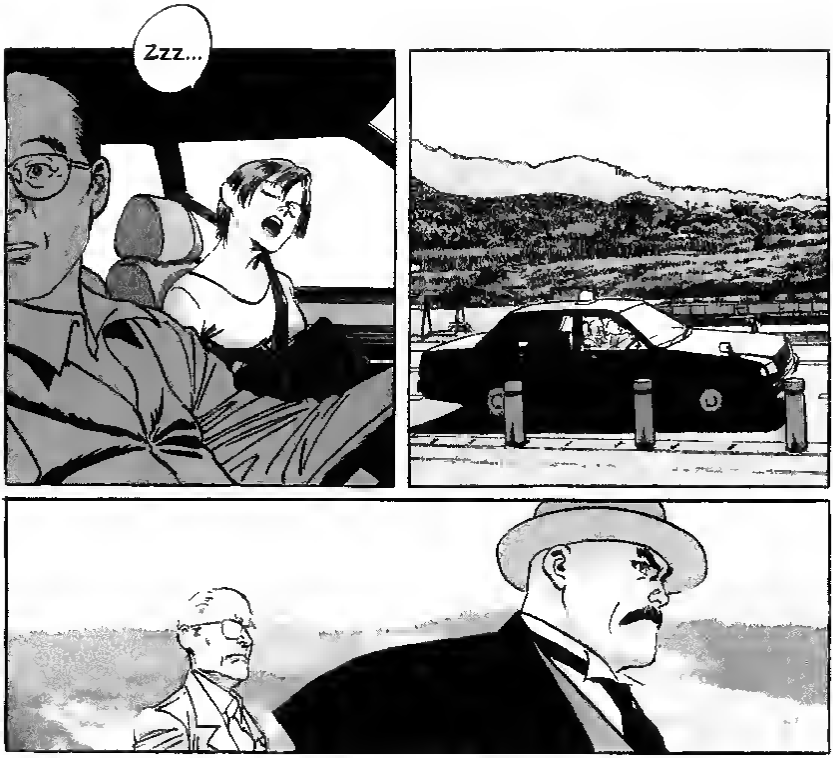
The absolute Imperial system was established in ancient Japan in the reign of Emperor Temmu



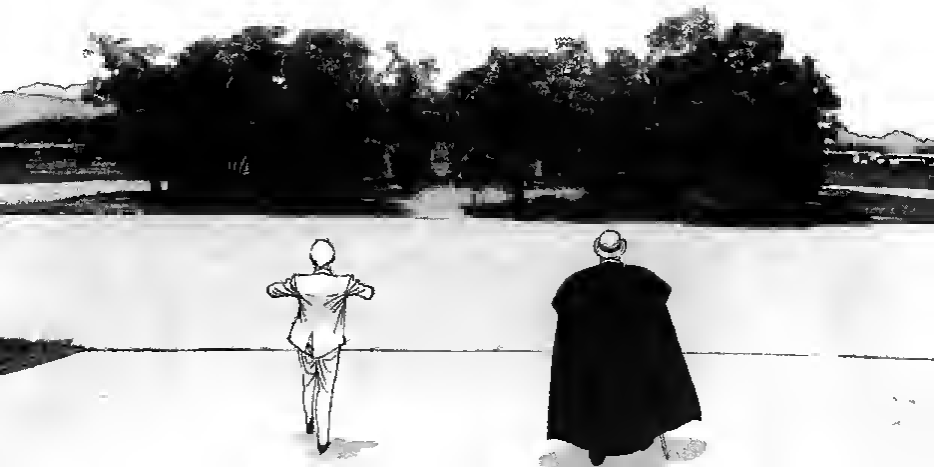
All of this was undoubtedly given forth by Emperor Temmu's charisma, after he brilliantly usurped the Imperial Throne through onmyodo and tactics

The Ritsuryo system strengthened the Imperial authority, and enthronement rituals such as the Accession and the Ceremonial Offering were determined around this time

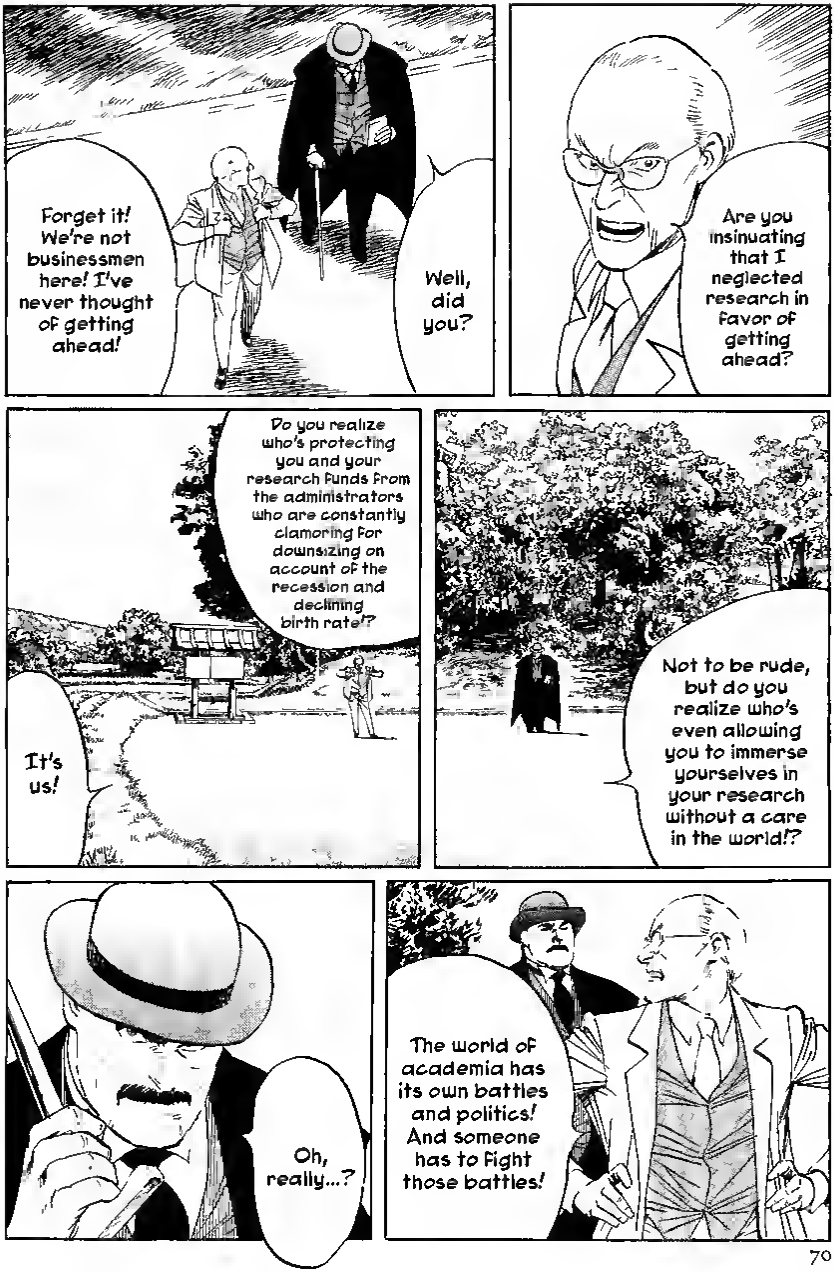

He may well have become the ultimate emperor, on par with Shi Huangdi and Gao Huangdi, who each started massive dynasties.
He may have built Asuka into a splendorous city, and embarked into the age of a new "dragon" of ambition and power.
But... this was not to be...



Fujiwara Palace Ruins, Kashihara City,
Nara Prefecture

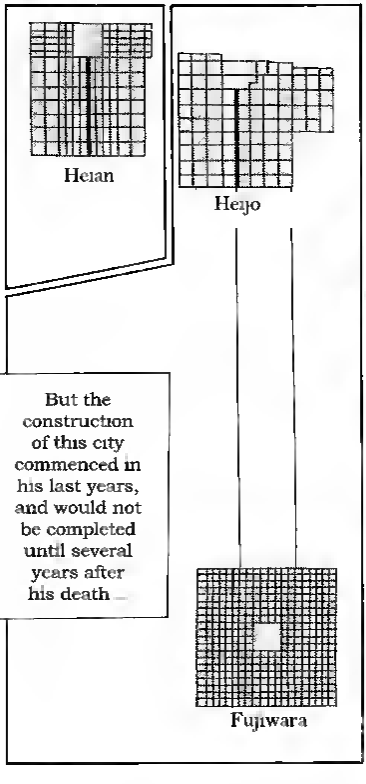


President Tatebayashi, your book was published thirty years ago, so it barely even touched Fujiwara...
The excavation of Fujiwara, with Fujiwara Palace in the center, began in earnest in around 1969.
飛鳥時代の実証
But why is it that you haven't published a single book since?
Yet along the line you've fallen away from research... Though I suppose that your growing collection of titles more than made up for it.
I've heard that Tatebayashi Masahito was once hailed as the historian soldier of fortune, publishing new theory after theory.
Recent photograph of author


Forget it! We're not businessmen here! I've never thought of getting ahead!
Well, did you?
Are you insinuating that I neglected research in favor of getting ahead?
Do you realize who's protecting you and your research funds from the administrators who are constantly clamoring for downsizing on account of the recession and declining birth rate!?
It's us!
Not to be rude, but do you realize who's even allowing you to immerse yourselves in your research without a care in the world!?
Oh, really...?
The world of academia has its own battles and politics! And someone has to fight those battles!

Do you call a professor so incompetent he can't even write a single research paper striking down his competent junior fellows an "academic battle"!?
So do you call a factional struggle with the faculty who's causing your colleagues trouble through anonymous letters and rumors "academic politics"?
AND AFTER ALL YOUR EFFORTS TO SURVIVE, YOU'VE LEFT ACADEMICS BEHIND!
Power is necessary to win the battle and survive!
Those pieces of scum might have crushed me underfoot if I wasn't careful!
The third mystery... is about Fujiwara...
...Forget it. I have no intention of getting in an argument about this.

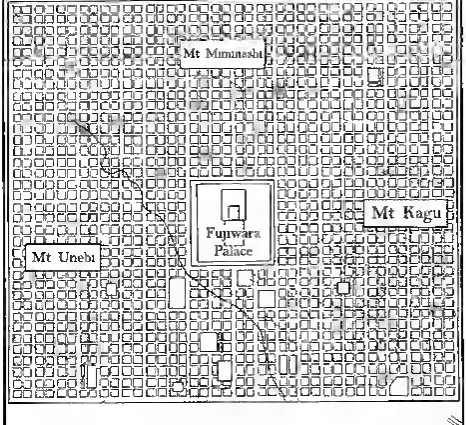
Fujiwara, the oldest planned city in Japan... This capital, completed in the late seventh century, was nearly five kilometers in all four directions, and had an estimated population of thirty thousand.

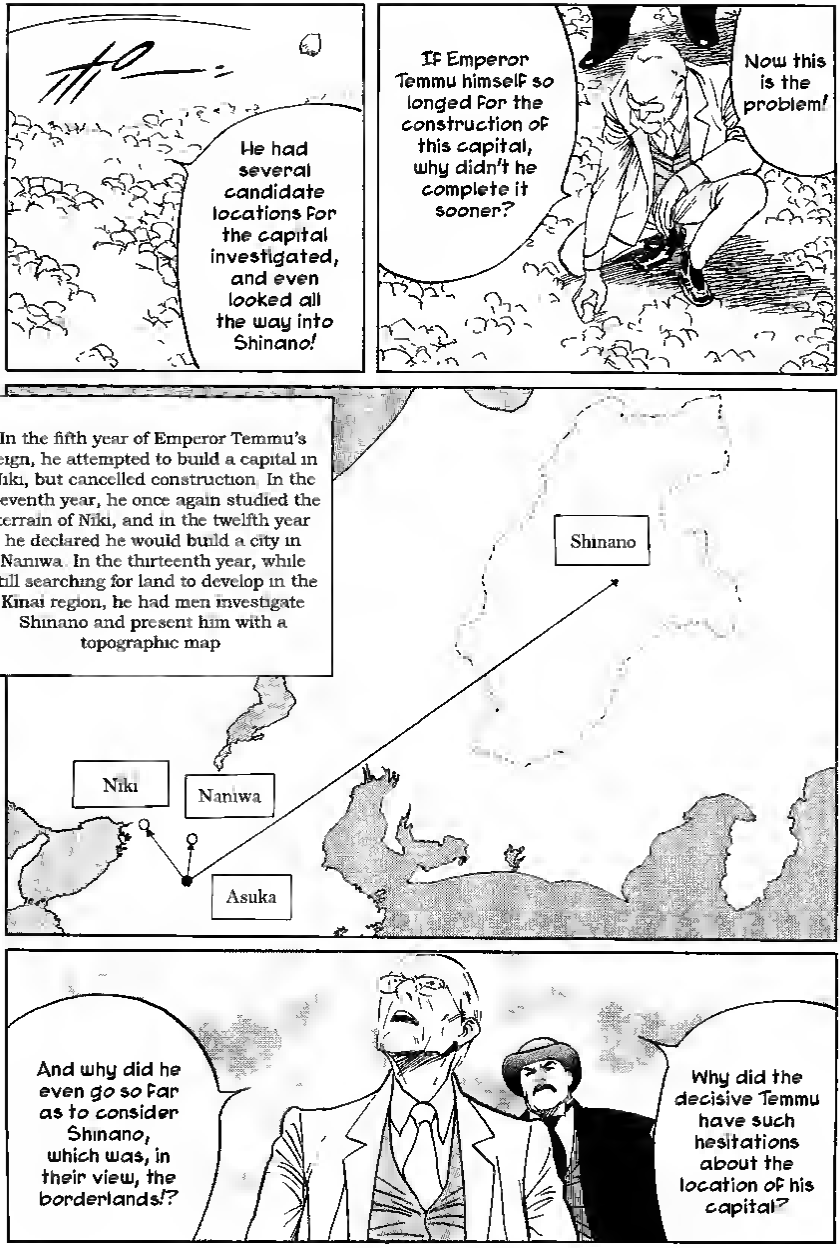


But the construction of this city commenced in his last years, and would not be completed until several years after his death...

Its location and scale must have been determined by Emperor Temmu.

It may not have been able to match the T'ang capital of Chang'an, but archaeological evidence has found that it was a giant city far beyond the later capitals of Heijo and Heian.



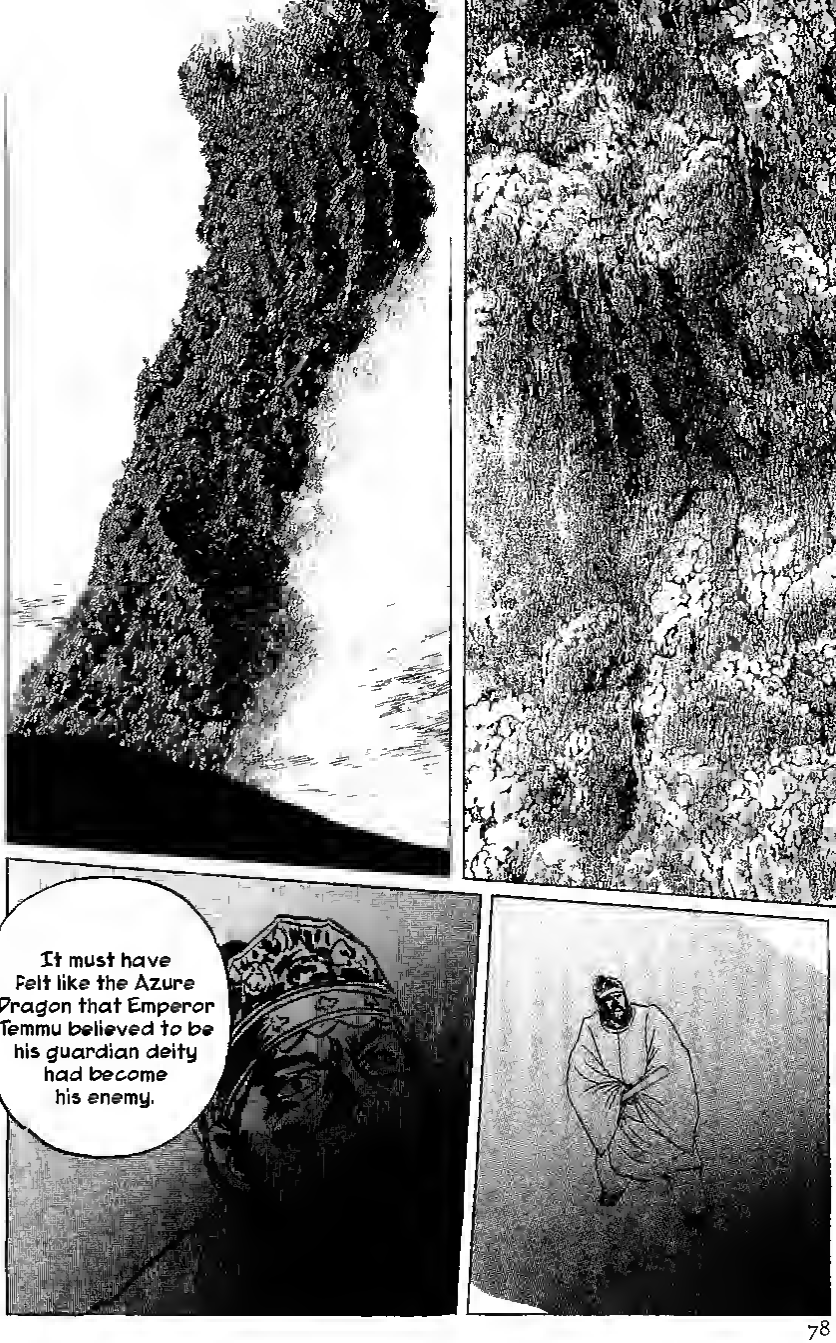

He had several candidate locations for the capital investigated, and even looked all the way into Shinano!
If Emperor Temmu himself so longed for the construction of this capital, why didn't he complete it sooner?
Now this is the problem!
In the fifth year of Emperor Temmu's reign, he attempted to build a capital in Niki, but cancelled construction. In the eleventh year, he once again studied the terrain of Niki, and in the twelfth year he declared he would build a city in Naniwa. In the thirteenth year, while still searching for land to develop in the Kinai region, he had men investigate Shinano and present him with a topographic map
Shinano
Niki
Naniwa
Asuka
And why did he even go so far as to consider Shinano, which was, in their view, the borderlands!?
Why did the decisive Temmu have such hesitations about the location of his capital?

ズオオオオオ
Precisely. The "Nihon Shoki's" entry on Emperor Temmu has abnormally many records of earthquakes.
EARTH-QUAKES ...!?

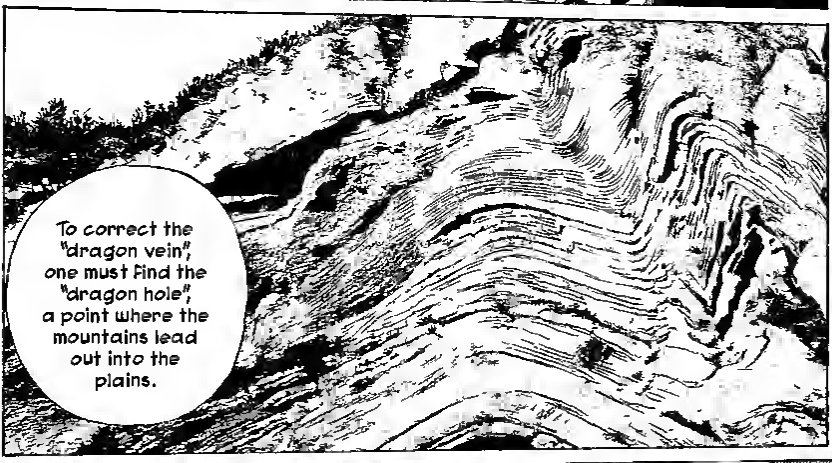
In particular, there was a massive earthquake in the thirteenth year of Emperor Temmu's reign (684).
This earthquake was confirmed by a geological survey, and was called the "Great Hakuho Earthquake".
The number of recorded earthquakes certainly juts out compared to other periods, but the damage was also greater.
At the twelfth hour, there was a great quake Men and women across the nation screamed and ran for shelter Soon the mountains collapsed and the rivers surged, and the mansions, peasants' homes, temples, and shrines in every province and district collapsed into rubble, so many they were countless Due to this quake, many people and livestock were killed or injured. The elders said, "Never before has there been such a quake as this one" "Nihon Shoki"

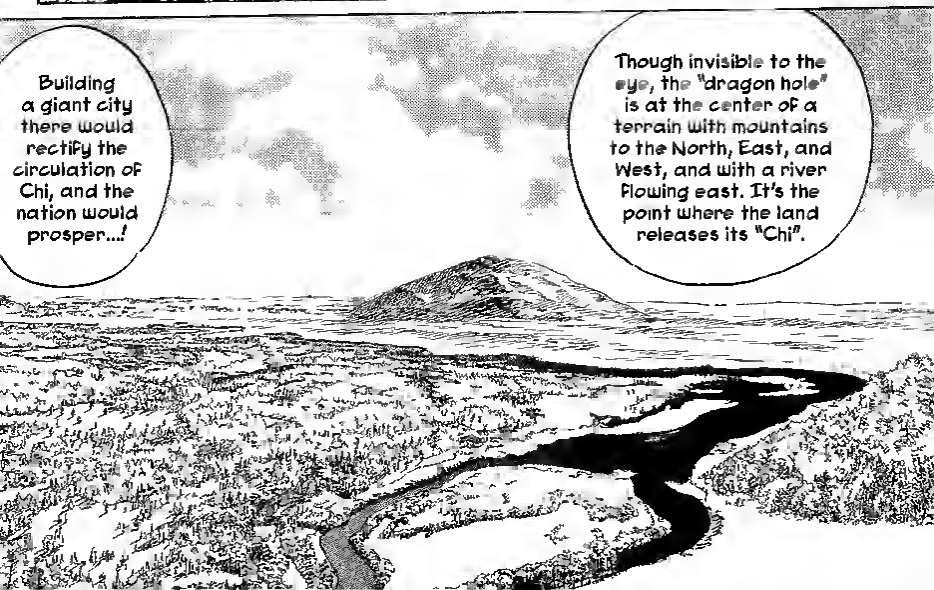
March
In this month, ash fell upon the land of Shinano, and the grass and trees withered.
"Nihon Shoki"
Mt. Asama
Shinano
And the very next year, in Shinano...
Researchers presume this to be caused by a volcanic eruption of Mt. Asama...!
ドドド

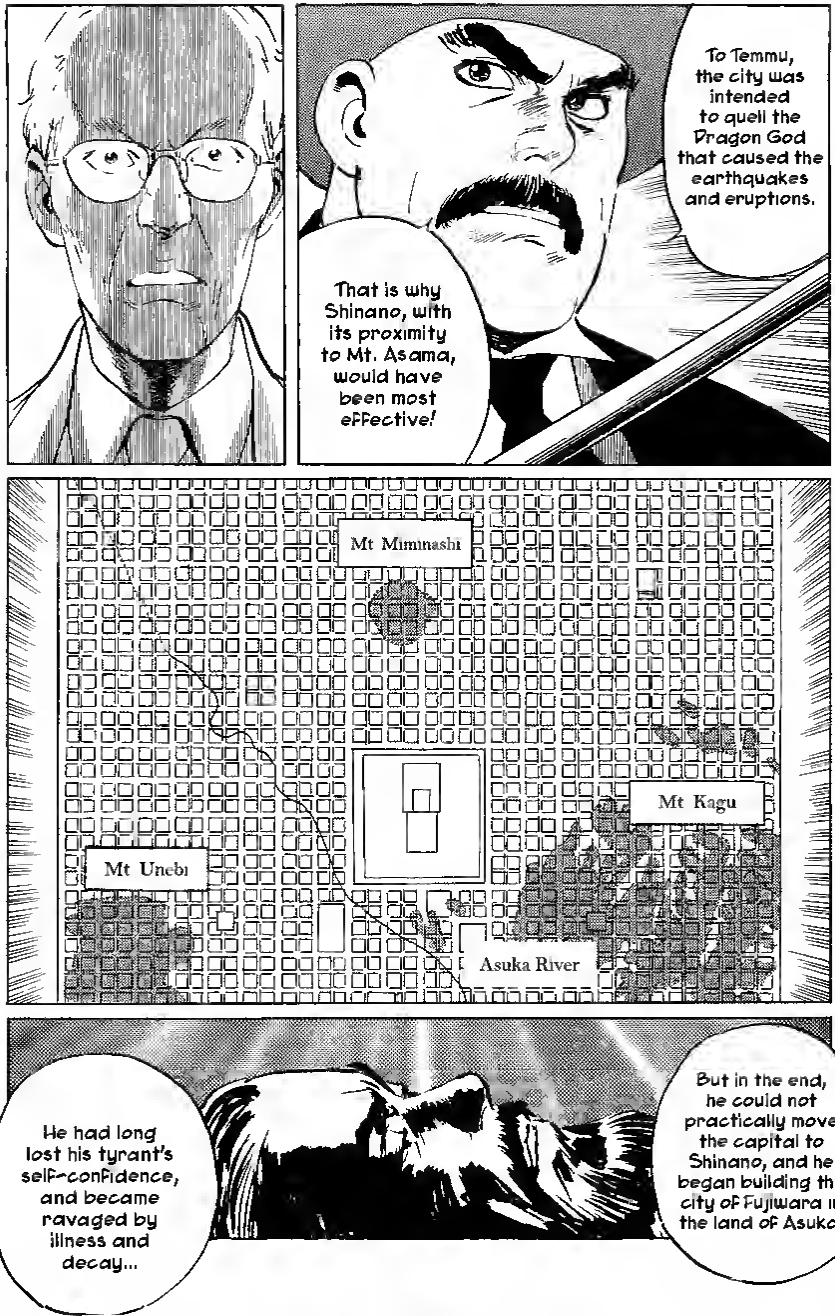
The thought that natural disasters were caused by misgovernment... That they were the Emperor's responsibility!
Not so for Emperor Temmu, who was well-versed in time-honored Chinese thought.
Any ordinary lord would take such disasters as a given.
Furthermore... the ideology of Feng Shui regards earthquakes and eruptions as phenomena of a disturbed "dragon vein"!
The "dragon vein" is the flow of the land's "chi", and its fluctuations cause earthquakes...
And if neglected, the disturbed energy could lead to further destruction!


It must have felt like the Azure Dragon that Emperor Temmu believed to be his guardian deity had become his enemy.

This is why he hesitated to choose a location for his city, and even considered moving the capital to Shinano!

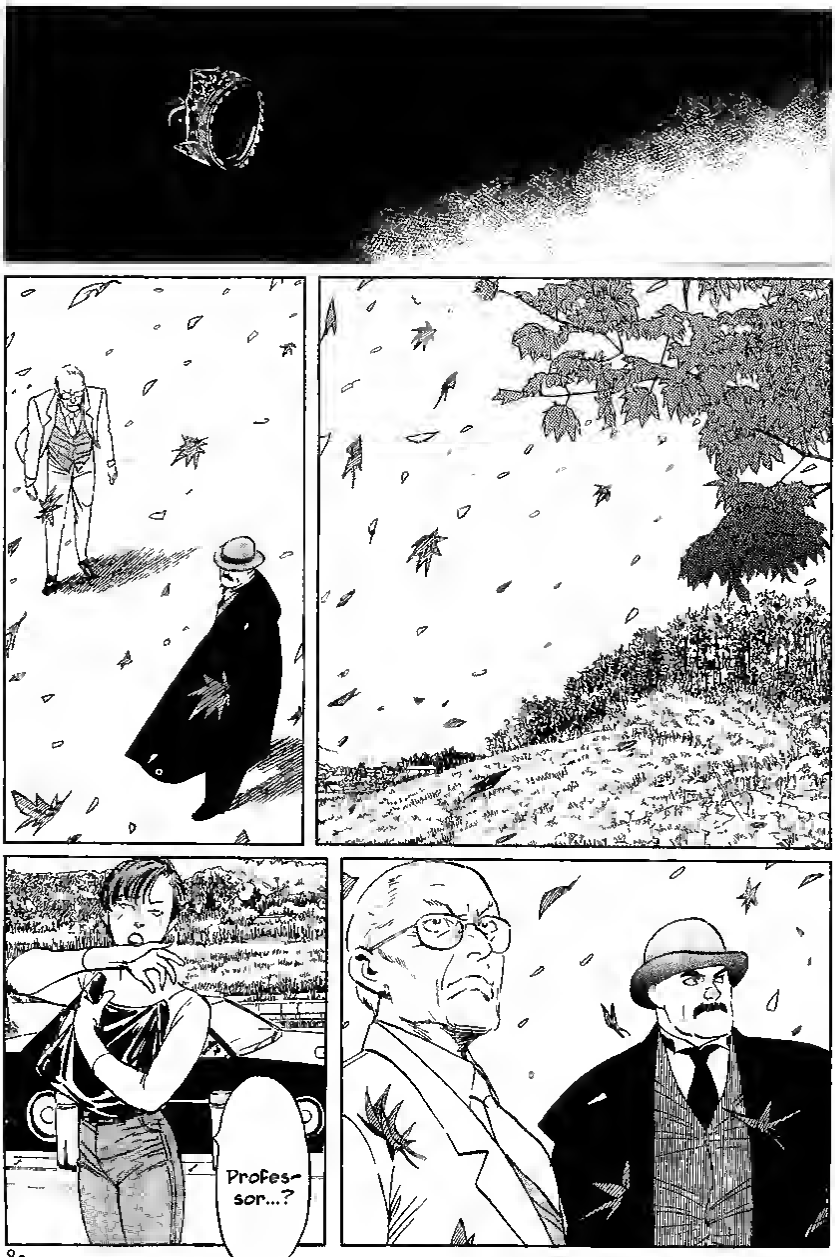

To correct the "dragon vein", one must find the "dragon hole", a point where the mountains lead out into the plains.

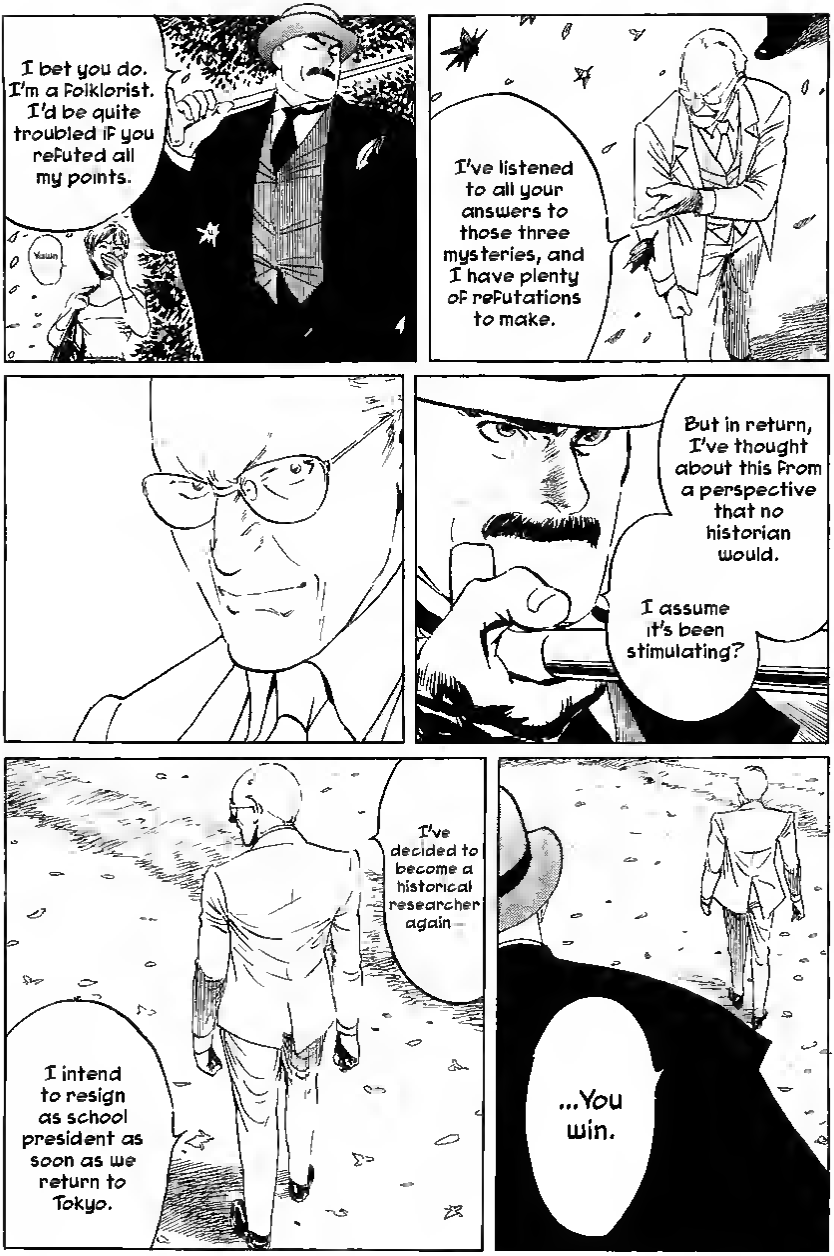

Though invisible to the eye, the "dragon hole" is at the center of a terrain with mountains to the North, East, and West, and with a river flowing east. It's the point where the land releases its "Chi".
Building a giant city there would rectify the circulation of Chi, and the nation would prosper...!


To Temmu, the city was intended to quell the Dragon God that caused the earthquakes and eruptions.
That is why Shinano, with its proximity to Mt. Asama, would have been most effective!
Mt Minnashi
Mt Kagu
Mt Unebi
Asuka River
He had long lost his tyrant's self-confidence, and became ravaged by illness and decay...
But in the end, he could not practically move the capital to Shinano, and he began building the city of Fujiwara in the land of Asuka.

The Dragon God had supported Tammu's vitality, his spells, and his ambition...

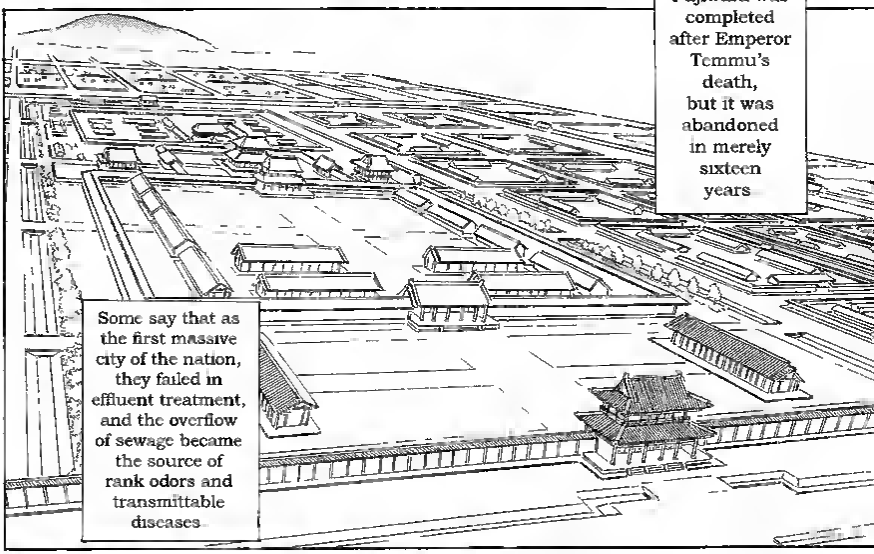
YET IN THE END, IT WAS THAT SAME UNKNOWN DRAGON THAT STRIPPED HIM OF ALL HE HAD.
AS IF THAT DRAGON HAD MADE A COVENANT WITH THE TYRANT...


Profes-
sor...?

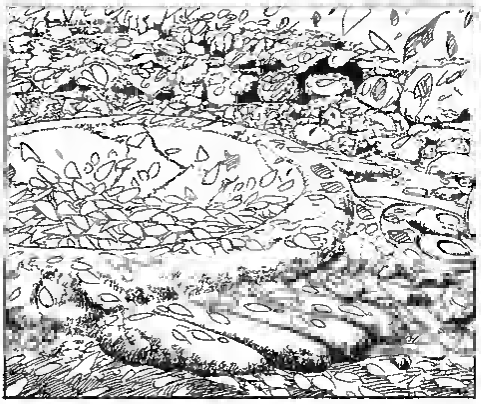

I bet you do. I'm a folklorist. I'd be quite troubled if you refuted all my points.
Yawn
I've listened to all your answers to those three mysteries, and I have plenty of refutations to make.
But in return, I've thought about this from a perspective that no historian would.
I assume it's been stimulating?
I've decided to become a historical researcher again—
I intend to resign as school president as soon as we return to Tokyo.
...You win.

Oh, but first, I'll need to sort out the documents in my office.
And there's a certain someone's request for leave that's bound for the shredder...

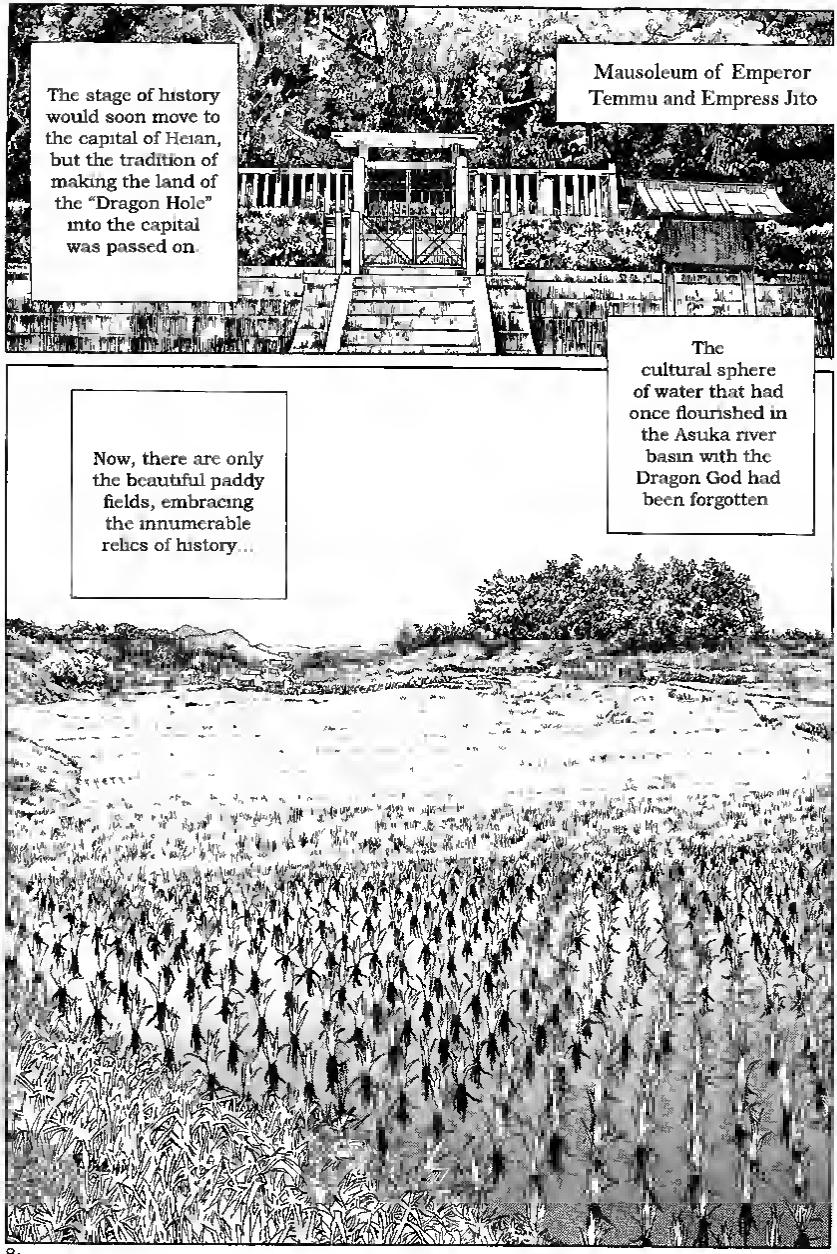
The capital of Fujiwara was completed after Emperor Temmu's death, but it was abandoned in merely sixteen years.



Some say that as the first massive city of the nation, they failed in effluent treatment, and the overflow of sewage became the source of rank odors and transmittable diseases.



Had the Dragon God truly been quelled...?

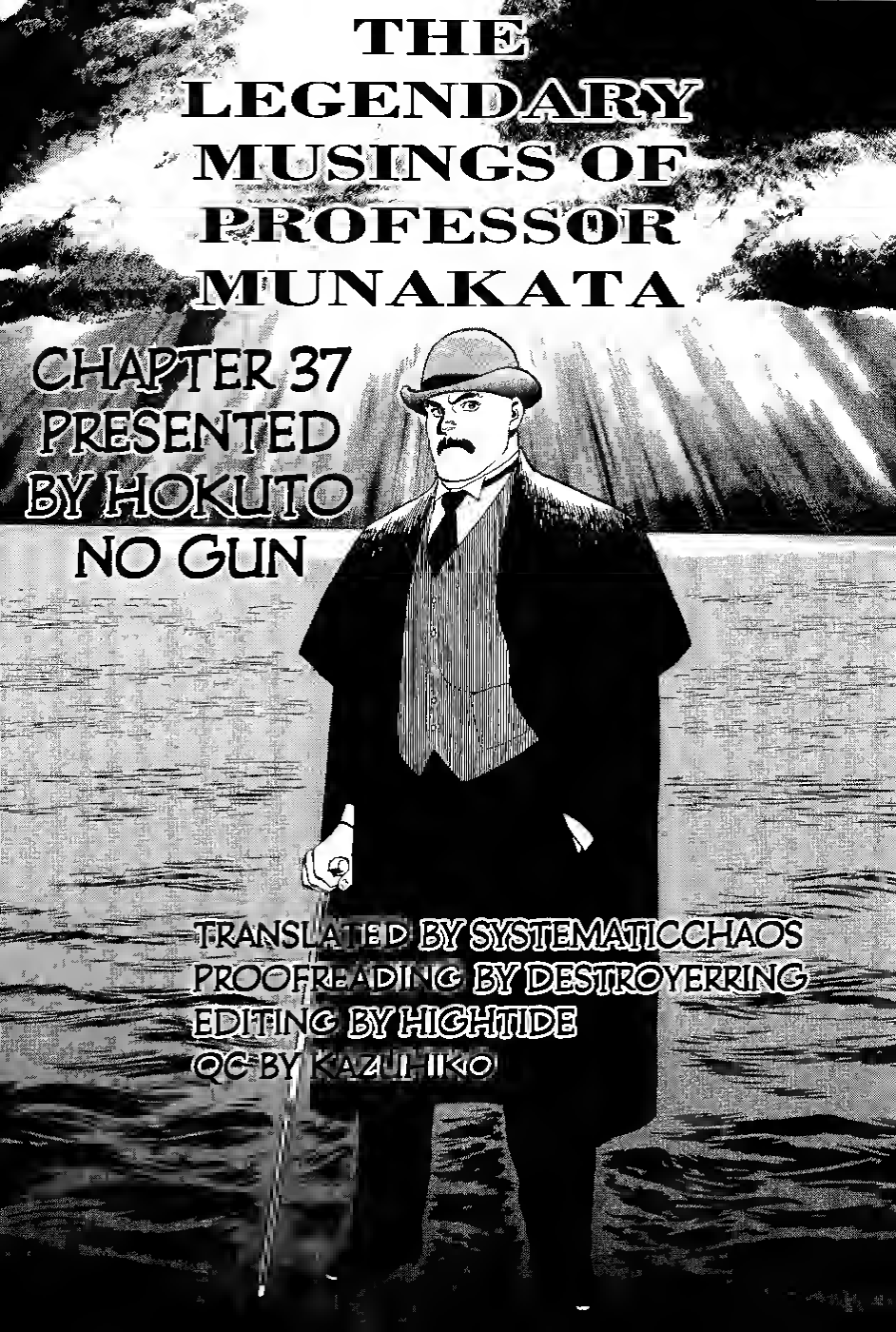

The stage of history would soon move to the capital of Heian, but the tradition of making the land of the "Dragon Hole" into the capital was passed on.
Mausoleum of Emperor Temmu and Empress Jito
The cultural sphere of water that had once flourished in the Asuka river basin with the Dragon God had been forgotten
Now, there are only the beautiful paddy fields, embracing the innumerable relics of history...

Splash
...So, Professor, what about the dragon?
Oh, come on, Professor! Tell me!
Munch munch

THE LEGENDARY MUSINGS OF PROFESSOR MUNAKATA

CHAPTER 37

PRESENTED BY HOKUTO NO GUN



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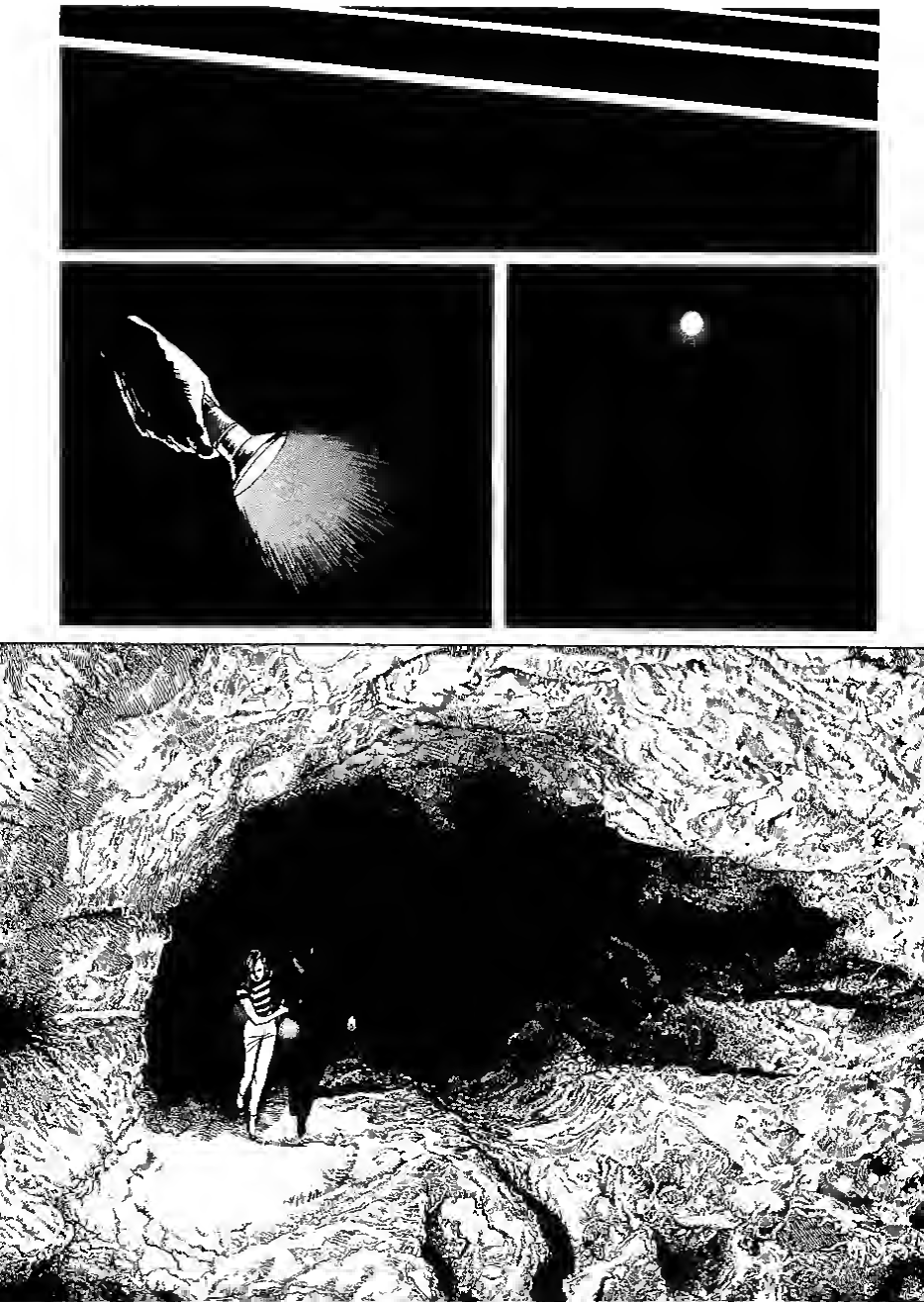
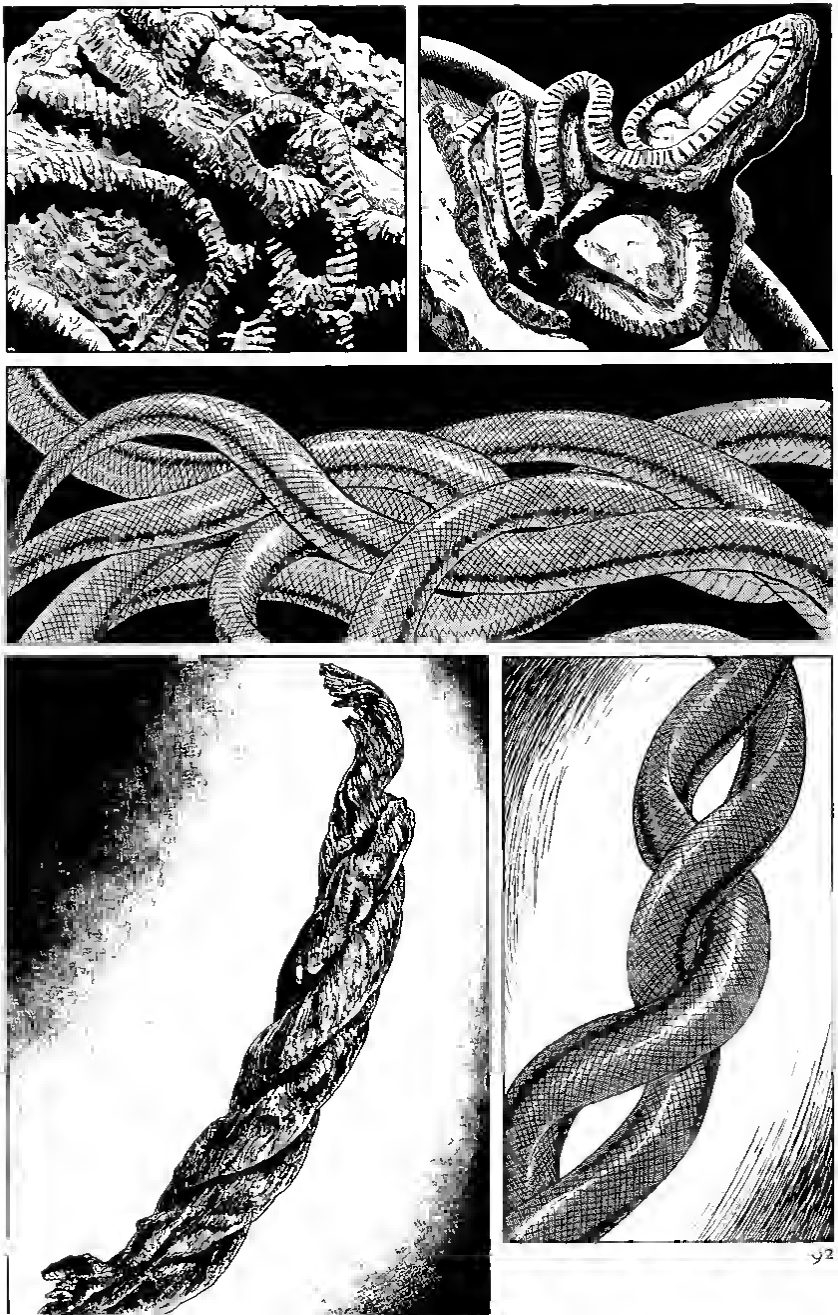
File 38:
The Snake Gods' Fusion



!
That's Jomon pottery...
Serpentine-pattern pottery...!

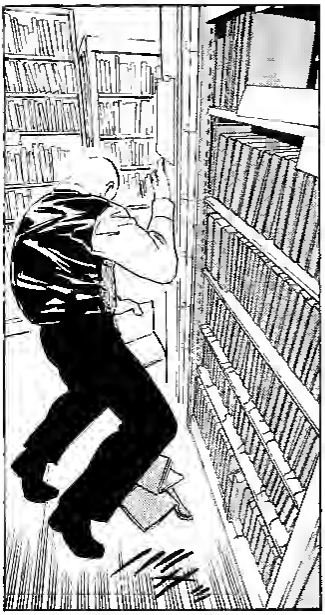


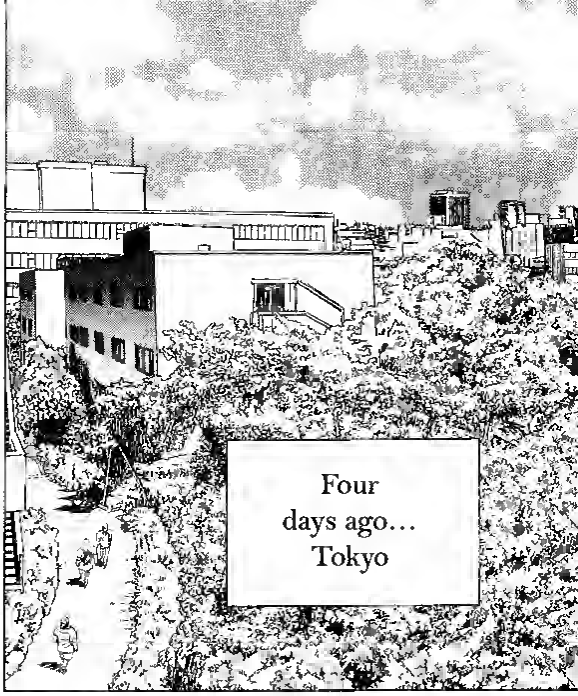
The snake that can kill a living creature in one bite. It was undoubtedly the most terrifying god to the forest-dwelling Jomon people.
The snake that vanishes in winter, yet revives with the vegetation in spring... The snake that regenerates every time it sheds its skin...

I...I think we should get out of here...
.....
The sacrifices to the Snake God, the prayer for a bountiful hunt... There were many areas where the deep-rooted faith in snakes lasted well beyond the Jomon Period...
I told you that you could wait out at the entrance, Remi.
Just let me get a picture of this pottery...

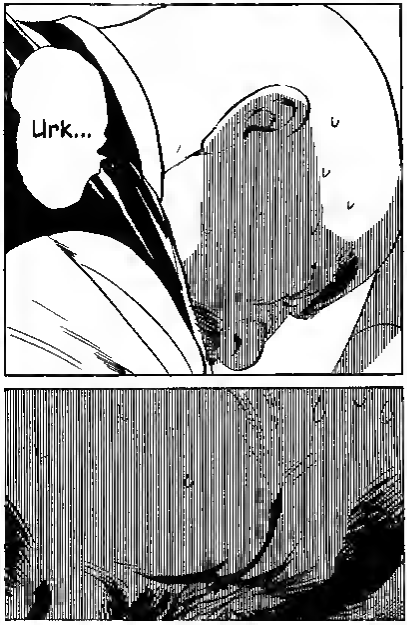
GYA AAAA HHHH HHH!
AIIIIIIIEEEEEEEE EEEEEEEEEE!

WAAA
UGH...
AHH
HHHH
HHH!




Four
days ago...
Tokyo

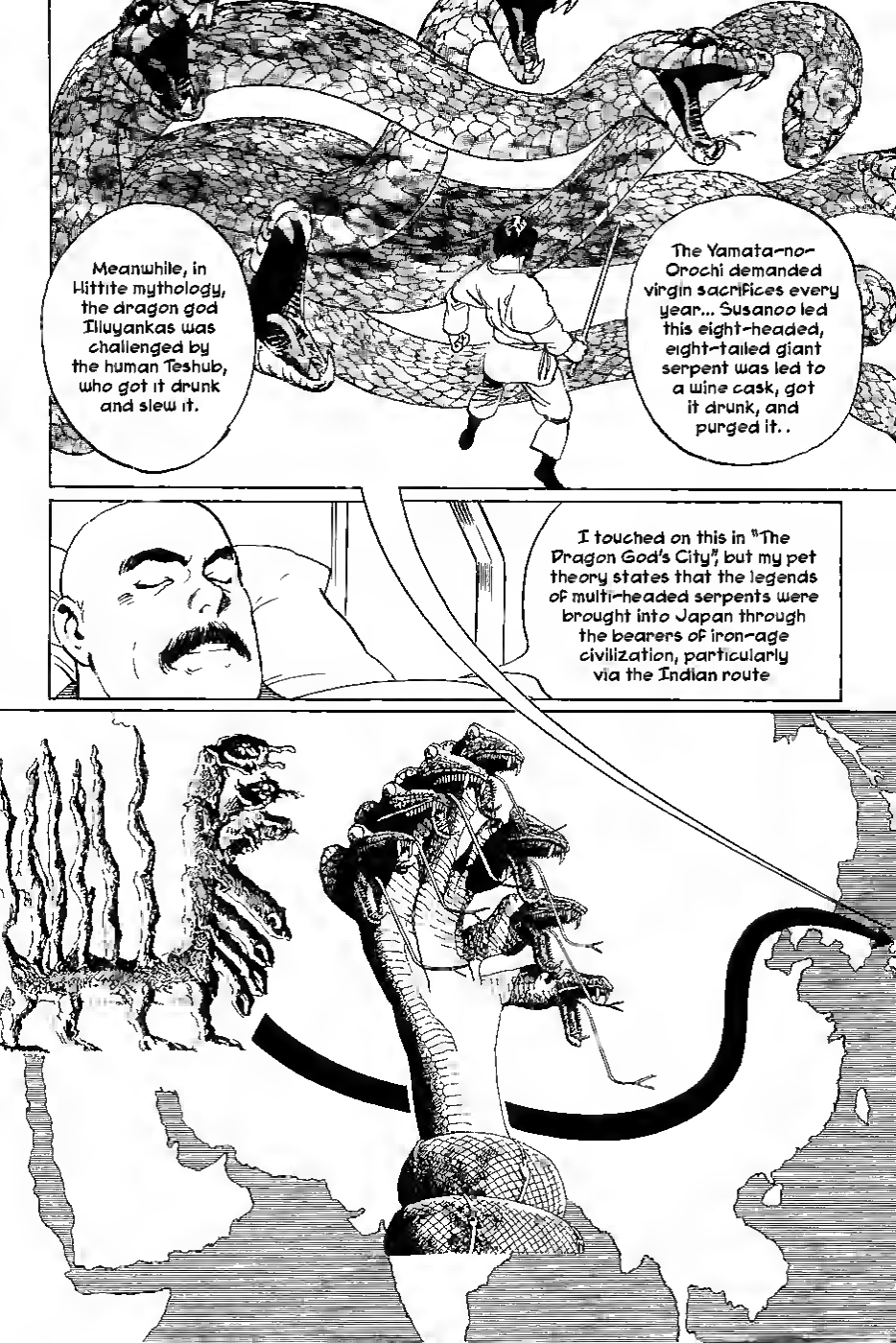
Unnnnnngggghhhhhh...
Urrnnnnnnggggggggghhhhhhhhh...

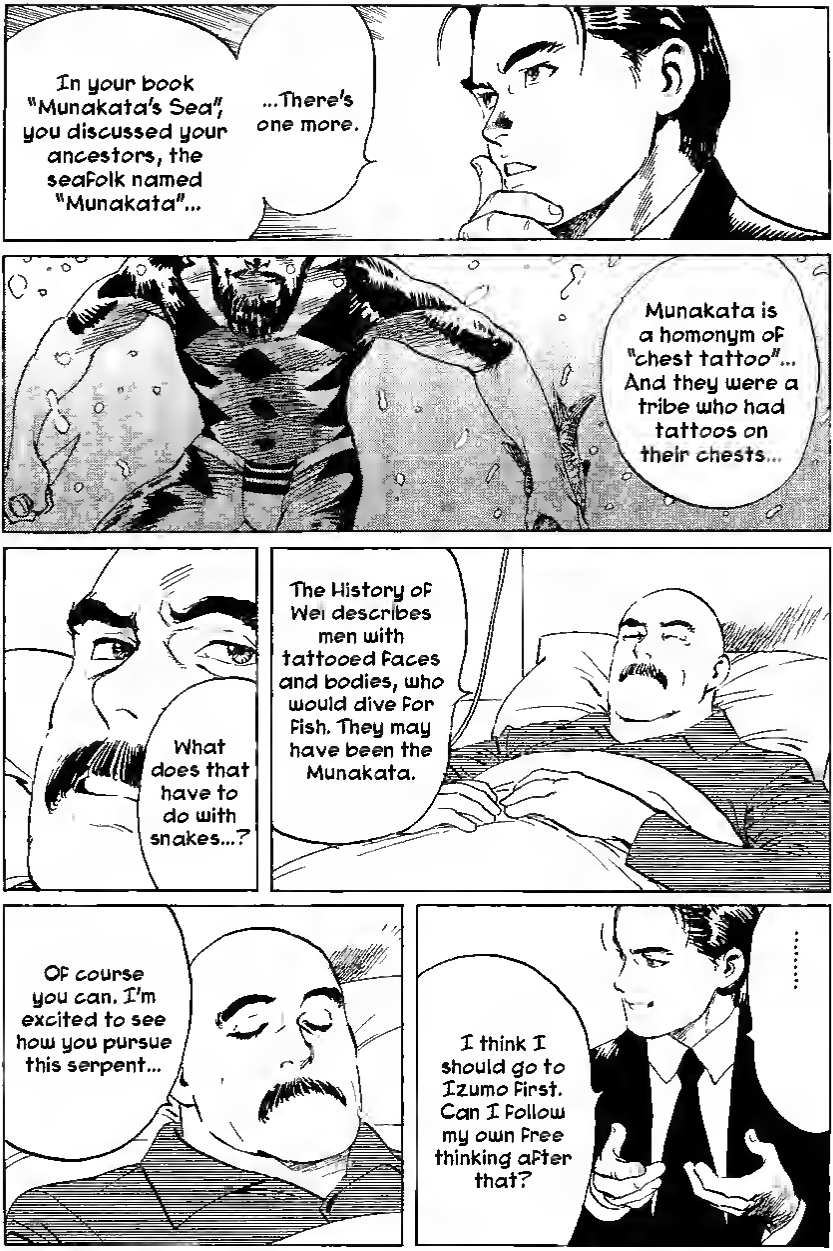

Urk...

I'm very sorry about the sudden phone call, Mr. Rindo...
PFFt... The Professor...?
He was in his office at the university, when one of his students discovered him in a cold sweat.
He has a fever, so we've inspected him, and we're deciding on whether or not we should operate.
Is it his gallstones?

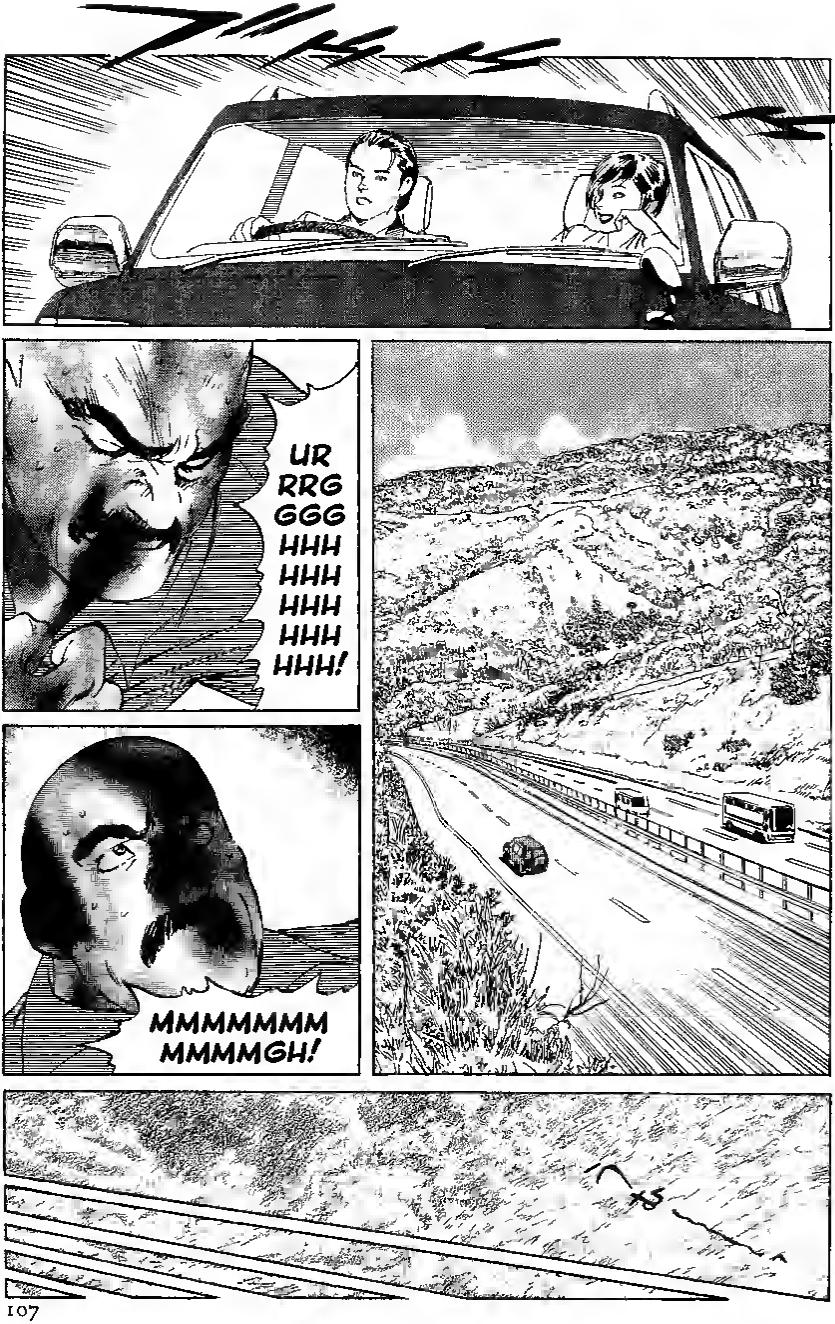
He'll be hospitalized for a few days until we finish our examination. So about your plans to research tomorrow...
...Yes, I've got a stone in my gallbladder. For now they're keeping it under control with medicine.
I've discussed with Ms. Yoshino, the editor-in-chief, and we've decided to let Rindo take over for me... Will you accept?
For the annual Zodiac series, right?
This is the year of the Snake...

YOU WOULDN'T GET GALLSTONES IF YOU DIDN'T EAT LIKE A SNAKE, PROFESSOR!
Watch me... I'll spit out... only the skin...
Come to think of it, speaking of snakes, there's the Yamata-no-Orochi of Izumo...
According to your theory, that was a legend that was transmitted from the ancient Hittites..
I've only read a couple of your books...
..But I specialize in medieval history. I don't know the first thing about folkloristics.

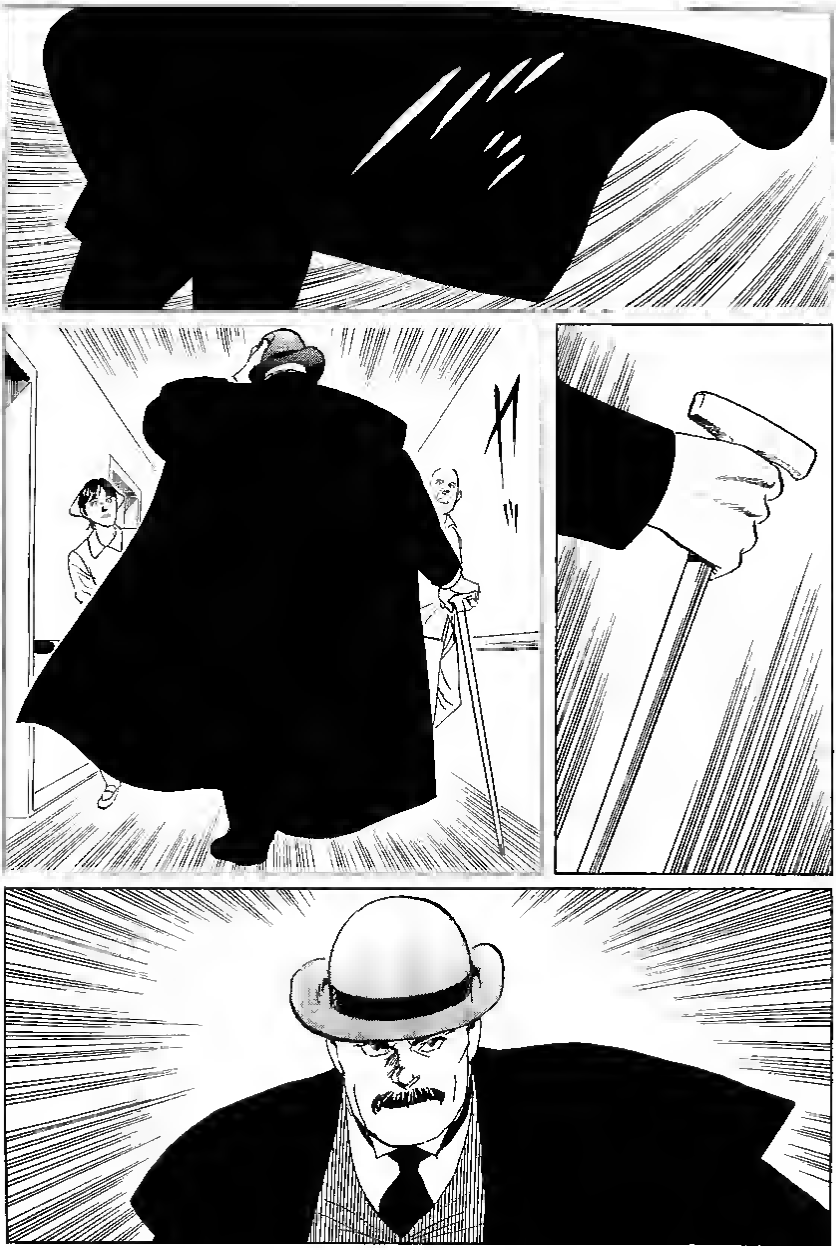

Meanwhile, in Hittite mythology, the dragon god Illuyankas was challenged by the human Teshub, who got it drunk and slew it.
The Yamata-no-Orochi demanded virgin sacrifices every year... Susanoo led this eight-headed, eight-tailed giant serpent was led to a wine cask, got it drunk, and purged it..
I touched on this in "The Dragon God's City", but my pet theory states that the legends of multi-headed serpents were brought into Japan through the bearers of iron-age civilization, particularly via the Indian route

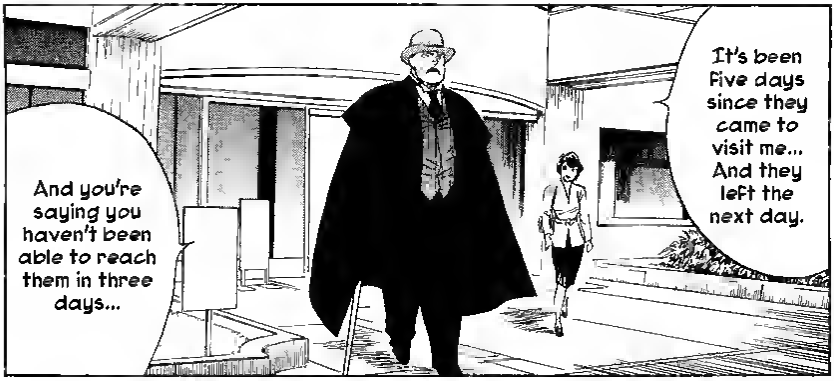

In your book "Munakata's Sea", you discussed your ancestors, the seafolk named "Munakata"...
...There's one more.
Munakata is a homonym of "chest tattoo"... And they were a tribe who had tattoos on their chests...
What does that have to do with snakes...?
The History of Wei describes men with tattooed faces and bodies, who would dive for fish. They may have been the Munakata.
Of course you can. I'm excited to see how you pursue this serpent...
I think I should go to Izumo first. Can I follow my own free thinking after that?
.....

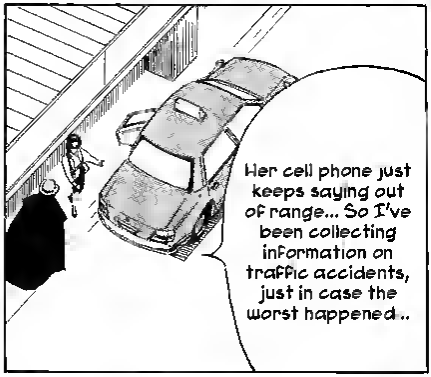
What about me?
Whenever we go gathering data, she always...
Oh, one more thing. You're going with Ike, aren't you?
Alright, then we'd better get going!
Well, it's nothing important, and you'll find out soon enough...
Nothing...
Ow...
Okay, Professor Munakata, I'll do my best! You take care now!


UR RRG GGG HHH HHH HHH HHH HHH!
MMMMMMM MMMMGH!

I got it. I'll never eat pork cutlets again. Same with tempura and eel.
Try not to eat anything too oily, Mr. Munakata.
Professor Munakata...
Ohhh, Ms. Yoshino! I'm getting discharged today! I don't even need surgery!
...Well, you see, there's something we're concerned about...
ABOUT IKE AND RINDO...!?




It's been five days since they came to visit me... And they left the next day.
And you're saying you haven't been able to reach them in three days...

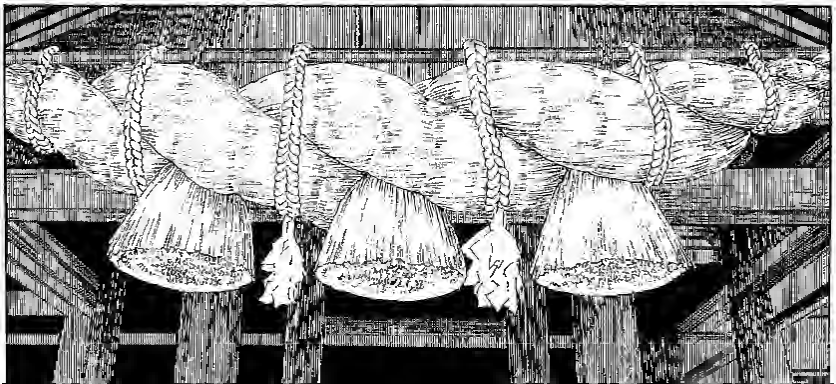

Her cell phone just keeps saying out of range... So I've been collecting information on traffic accidents, just in case the worst happened..

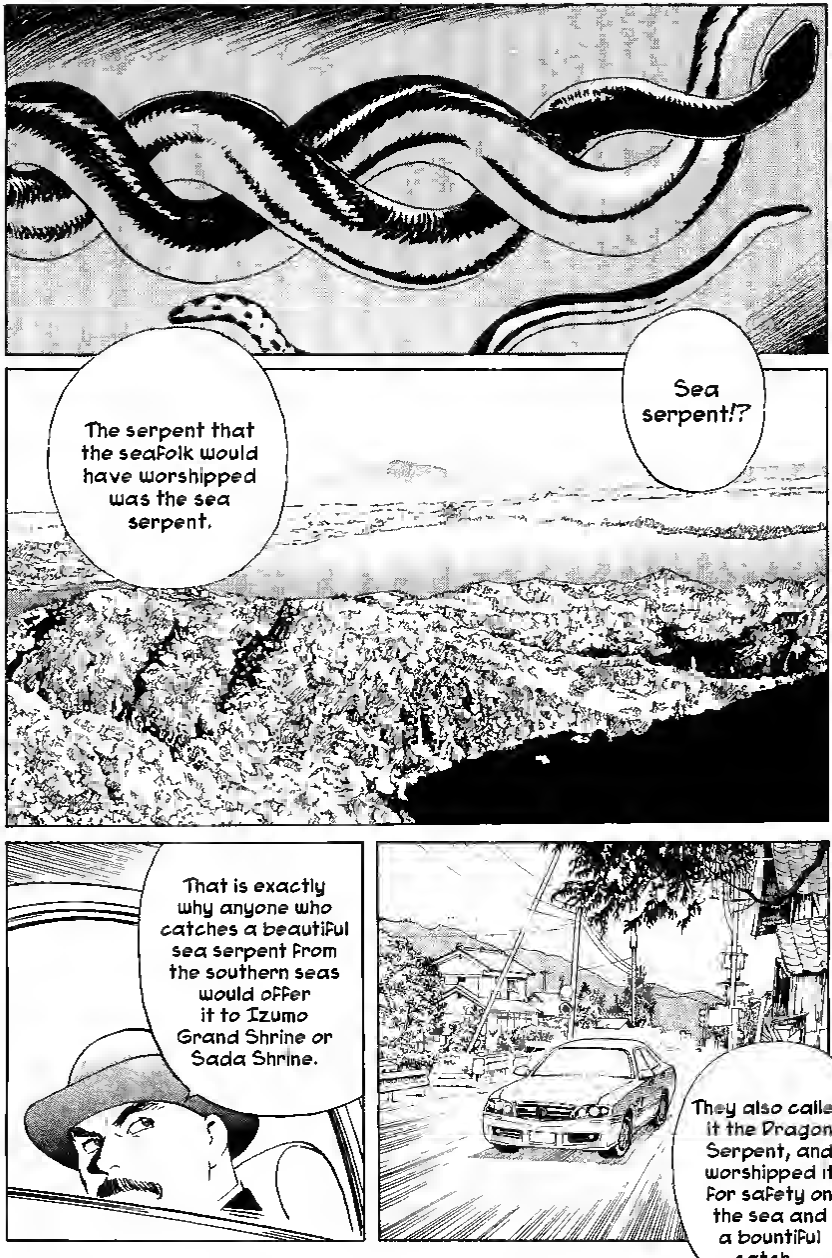
That's right. The last I heard from them was when Ike called me from their hotel in Izumo on the first day. I don't know if they're still in Izumo or if they've moved on from there.

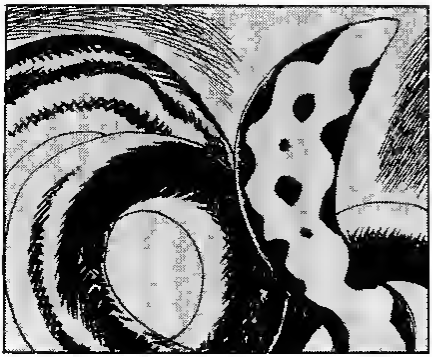
I got it. I'll try and follow their footsteps.
Even if we have to file a missing persons report, I may be able to narrow down the search radius just a little.
Thank you so much, Professor!

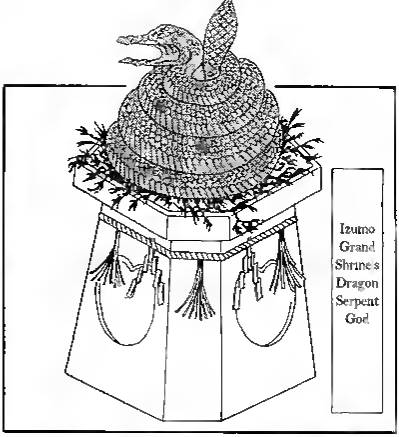
ANA

Izumo

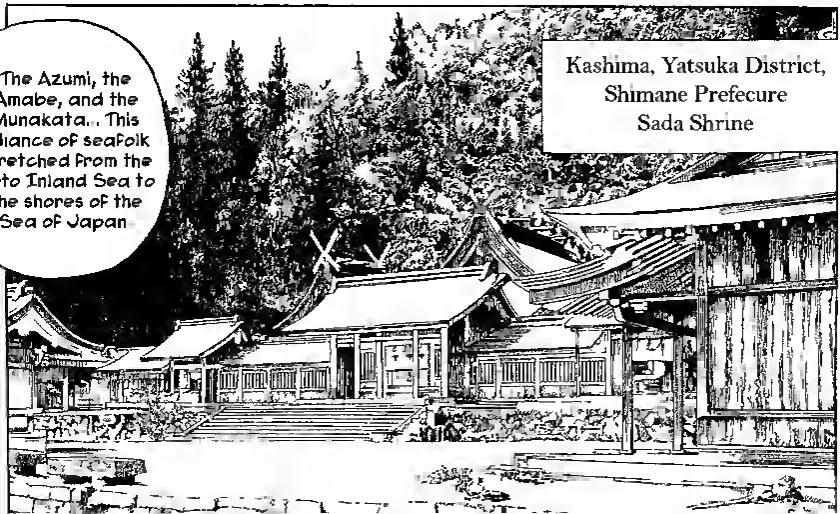



Sea serpent!?
The serpent that the seaFolk would have worshipped was the sea serpent.
That is exactly why anyone who catches a beautiful sea serpent from the southern seas would offer it to Izumo Grand Shrine or Sada Shrine.
They also called it the Dragon Serpent, and worshipped it for safety on the sea and a bountiful catch ..



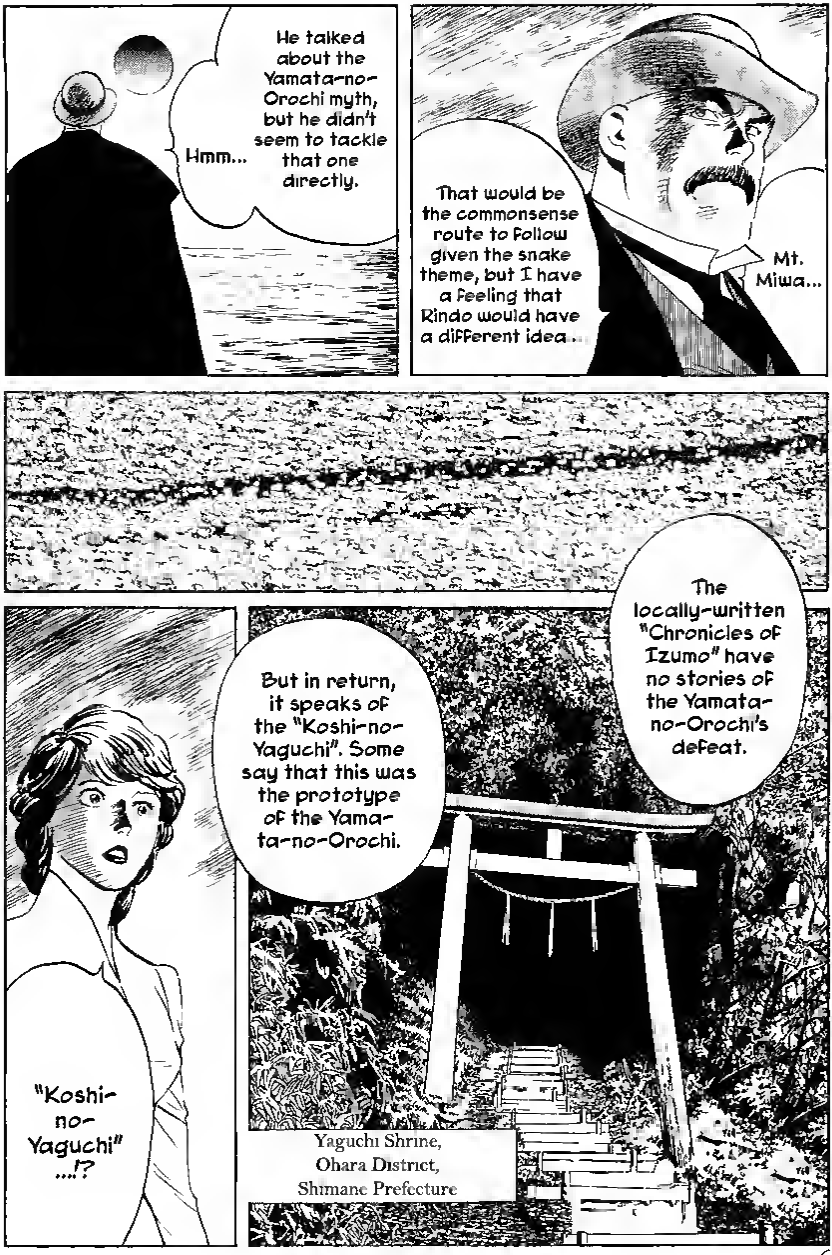

Izumo Grand Shrine's Dragon Serpent God

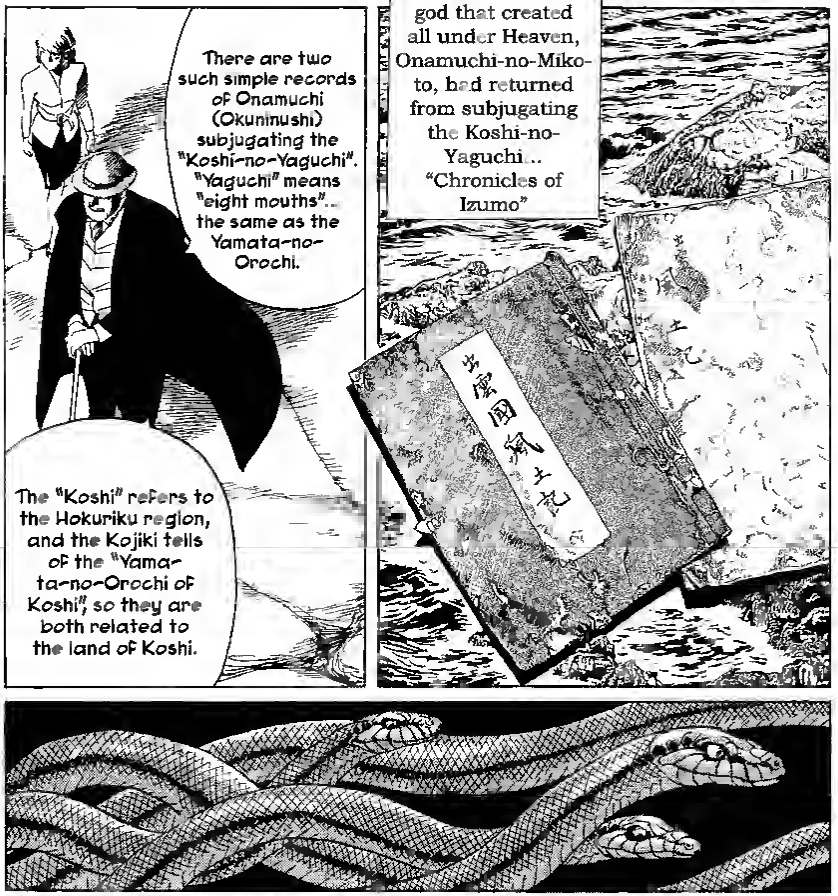
In the Yayoi period following the Jomon, Izumo was the central location of the seafolk that spread throughout west Japan.


The Azumi, the Amabe, and the Munakata... This alliance of seafolk stretched from the Seto Inland Sea to the shores of the Sea of Japan
Kashima, Yatsuka District, Shimane Prefecure
Sada Shrine

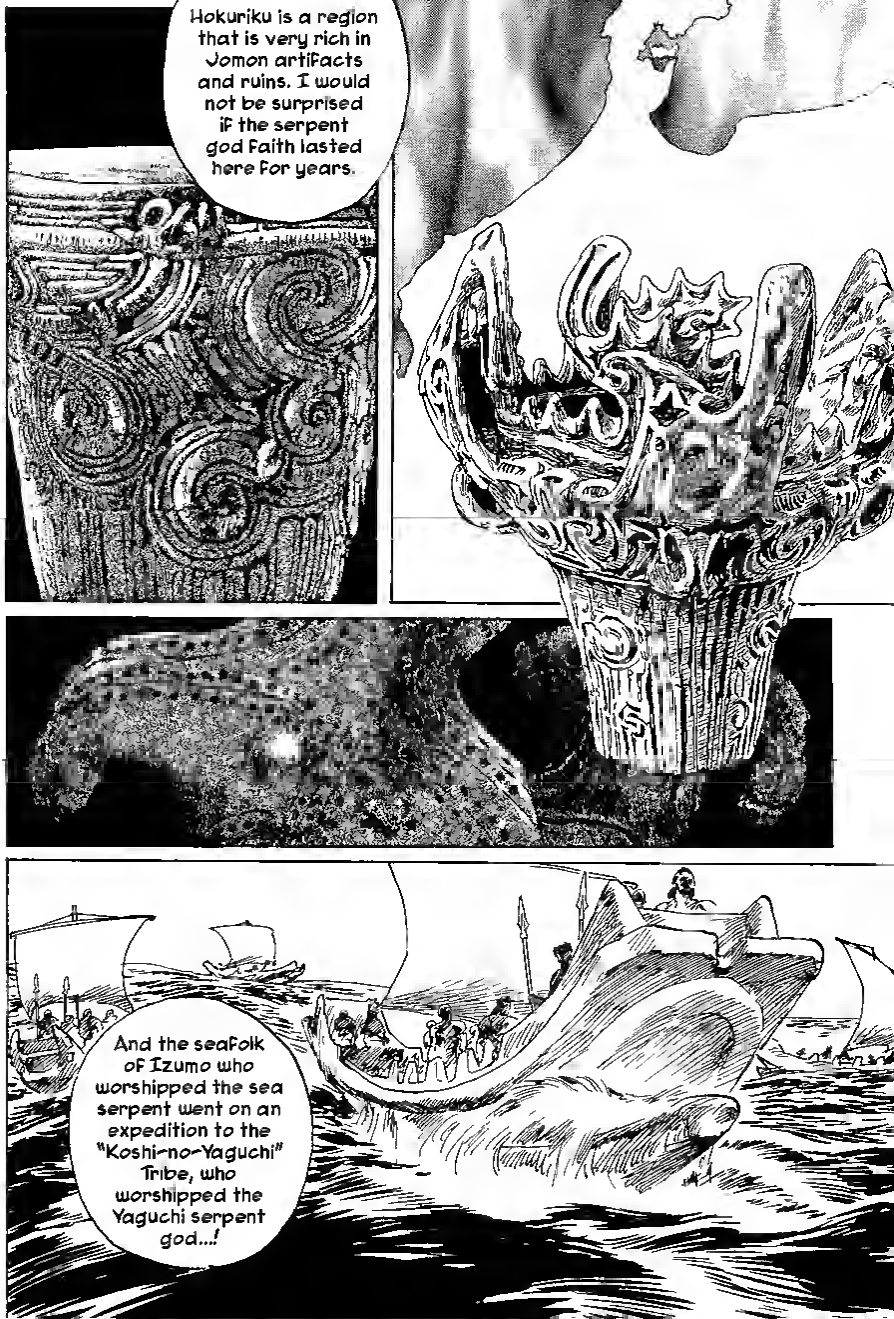
IT LOOKS LIKE THEY CAME HERE! SOMEONE AT THE SHRINE OFFICE SAID THAT A WOMAN FITTING IKE'S DESCRIPTION ASKED THEM TO TAKE A PHOTOGRAPH...
Hmm...
Sada Shrine is said to worship the sea serpent born in the undersea cavern in Kukedo of Kaga.
I guess that Rindo is following the sea serpent route after all.

There's a good chance that this was the sea serpent.
Speaking of sea serpents, there is a myth that a god appeared, illuminating the sea of Izumo, and wished to Okuninushi that he would be enshrined on Mt. Miwa in Yamato...
DO YOU THINK THAT RINDO AND IKE WENT TO MT. MIWA!?
But... why would a sea serpent choose an inland mountain...?
Come to think of it, I've heard that Mt. Miwa is known as the snake god's mountain.


He talked about the Yamata-no-Orochi myth, but he didn't seem to tackle that one directly.
Hmm...
That would be the commonsense route to follow given the snake theme, but I have a feeling that Kindo would have a different idea..
Mt. Miwa...
The locally-written "Chronicles of Izumo" have no stories of the Yamata-no-Orochi's defeat.
But in return, it speaks of the "Koshi-no-Yaguchi". Some say that this was the prototype of the Yamata-no-Orochi.
"Koshi-no-Yaguchi" ...!?
Yaguchi Shrine, Ohara District, Shimane Prefecture


There are two such simple records of Onamuchi (Okuninushi) subjugating the "Koshi-no-Yaguchi". "Yaguchi" means "eight mouths"... the same as the Yamata-no-Orochi.
The "Koshi" refers to the Hokuriku region, and the Kojiki tells of the "Yamata-no-Orochi of Koshi", so they are both related to the land of Koshi.
In the village of Mori... When the god that created all under Heaven, Onamuchi-no-Miko-to, had returned from subjugating the Koshi-no-Yaguchi... "Chronicles of Izumo"

AND THERE WAS A RACE THAT STILL DEFENDED THE YAGUCHI FAITH IN THE LAND OF KOSHI!
I BELIEVE THAT THE "YAGUCHI" WAS THE SERPENT GOD OF THE MOUNTAIN WORSHIPPED SINCE THE JOMON PERIOD...


Hokuriku is a region that is very rich in Jomon artifacts and ruins. I would not be surprised if the serpent god Faith lasted here for years.
And the seafolk of Izumo who worshipped the sea serpent went on an expedition to the "Koshi-no-Yaguchi" Tribe, who worshipped the Yaguchi serpent god...!

This may have been the second-century battle known as the "Civil War of Wa"...
It's possible that the kingdom of the Yaguchi serpent god was swallowed up by and made subservient to the Izumo Alliance of the sea serpent.

It was about this period that the chieftans' graves unique to San'in called the "Four-Corner Protrusion Barrow Tombs" were built

Their distribution speaks of the Izumo alliance's sphere of influence... But why this alliance...?

Koshi

Kibi

Izumo

Yamato

Because the Yamato forces, their greatest threat, were expanding in the Kinai region...

HUH!?

Sorry... Yes...?

They said they ate Echizen crab and stayed in a Kanazawa hotel...
We finally learned today that Ike sent a message to her friend on the second night!
FROM KANAZA-WA!?
LET'S GO, PROFES-SOR!
From Izumo to Kanazawa... The land of Koshi...
ドドド・・・

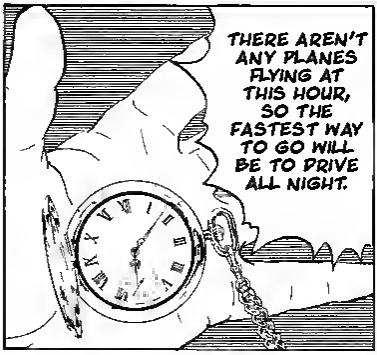
Were they chasing the "Koshi-no-Yaguchi"...? No, but...
Muna-kata...
The Izumo seafolk, the Munakata...
Munakata are chest tattoos...
The sea serpent and the land serpent Yaguchi...
The seafolk that worshipped the sea serpent, and made tattoos of its pattern.

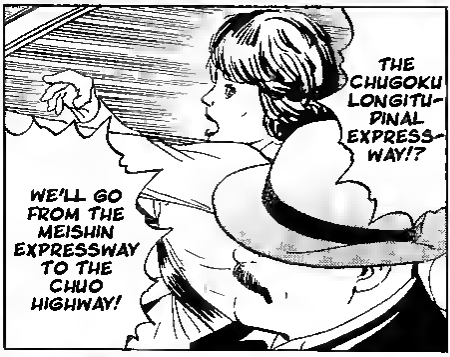
...It's so dark that I can't tell day from night. It must've been two days since we fell in here...
十月：
11°
水

So that hole must've been to drop things from above.
Bones...?
They're traces of the Jomon-era sacrifice rituals...
We can't climb out.
Urk...

There's some-thing...

Some-thing deeper in the cave...


THERE AREN'T ANY PLANES FLYING AT THIS HOUR, SO THE FASTEST WAY TO GO WILL BE TO DRIVE ALL NIGHT.

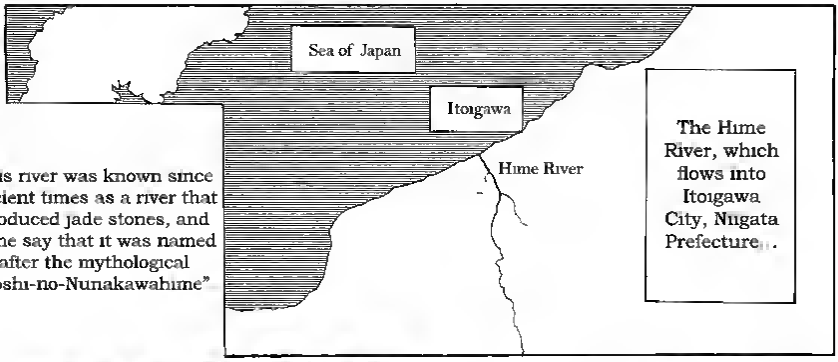

THE CHUGOKU LONGITUDINAL EXPRESSWAY!?
WE'LL GO FROM THE MEISHIN EXPRESSWAY TO THE CHUO HIGHWAY!

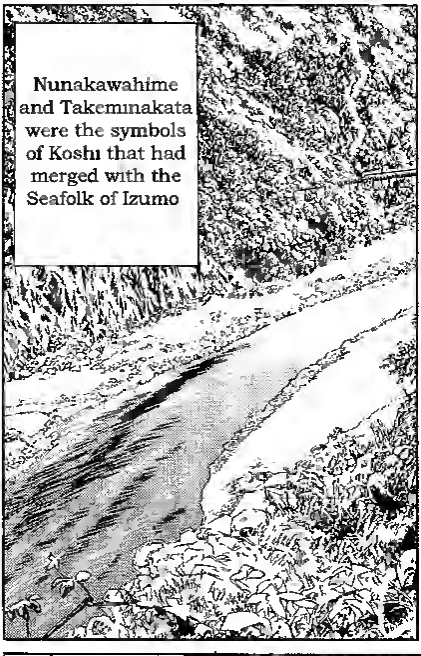
TRUE DESTINATION!?

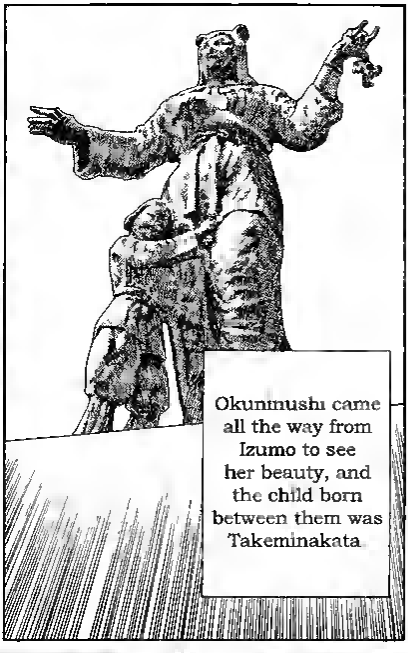
IF MY CONJECTURE IS CORRECT, THEY WERE ONLY PASSING THROUGH KANAZAWA. SO LET'S HEAD STRAIGHT...
FOR THEIR TRUE DESTINATION BEYOND IT!

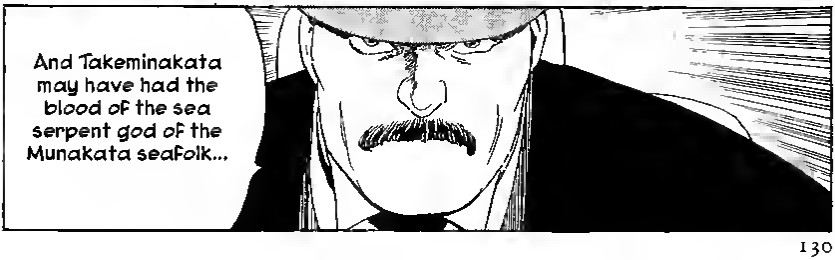
According to the "Kojiki", a god named Takemikazuchi was sent from Takamagahara to Izumo, ruled by Okuninushi, to demand that he surrender the nation...
Okuninushi's son, a mighty warrior named Takeminakata, attempted to settle this with a contest of strength...
But he tore his arms off as if he were plucking a reed. Takeminakata fled to the distant land of Suwa, begging for his life, and became a god enshrined there.

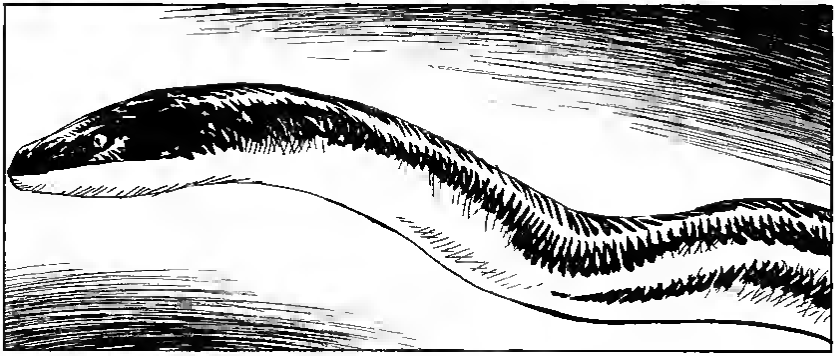
Perhaps this represents that the seafolks' Izumo Alliance was eventually defeated by and surrendered to the Yamato Forces... Now...
Then Okuninushi was defenseless, and surrendered the land to the descendant of the gods.. This was the myth of the "Nation-Yielding".
Takeminakata, who was driven to Suwa with his arms ripped off... What does he represent...?
HE WAS MADE INTO THE FORM OF A SERPENT!

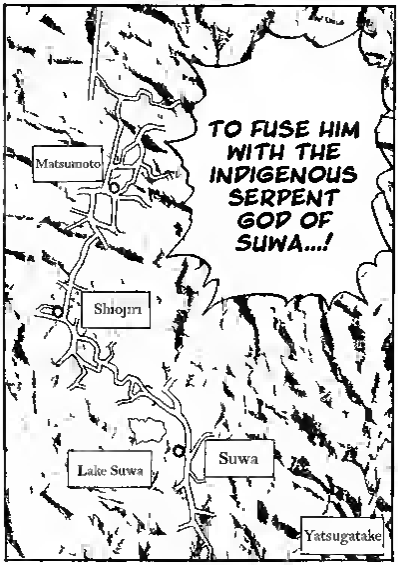

Sea of Japan
Itoigawa
Hime River
This river was known since ancient times as a river that produced jade stones, and some say that it was named after the mythological "Koshi-no-Nunakawahime"
The Hime River, which flows into Itoigawa City, Niigata Prefecture...

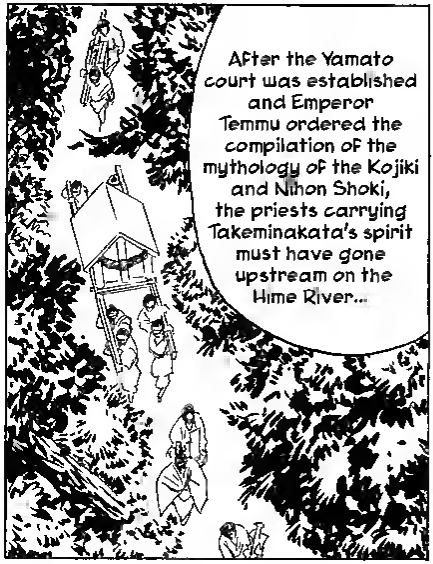

Nunakawahime and Takeminakata were the symbols of Koshi that had merged with the Seafolk of Izumo

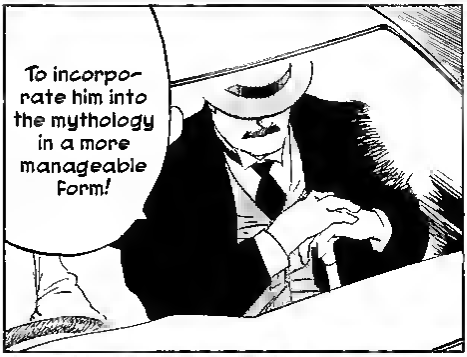

Okunimushi came all the way from Izumo to see her beauty, and the child born between them was Takeminakata

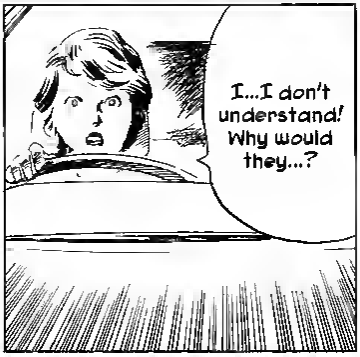

And Takeminakata may have had the blood of the sea serpent god of the Munakata seafolk...

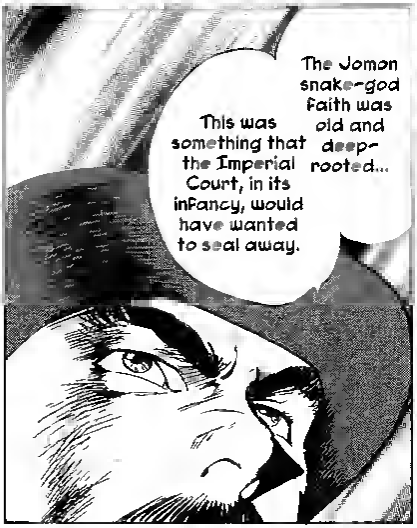



TO FUSE HIM WITH THE INDIGENOUS SERPENT GOD OF SUWA...!
Matsumoto
Shiojiri
Lake Suwa
Suwa
Yatsugatake

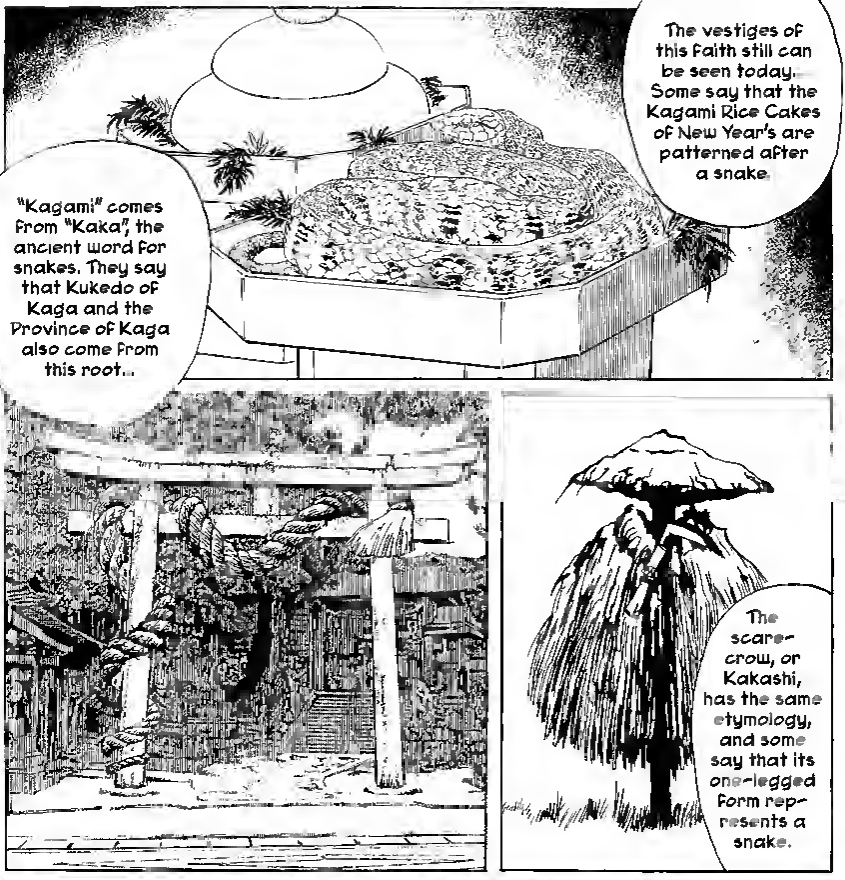

After the Yamato court was established and Emperor Temmu ordered the compilation of the mythology of the Kojiki and Nihon Shoki, the priests carrying Takeminakata's spirit must have gone upstream on the Hime River...

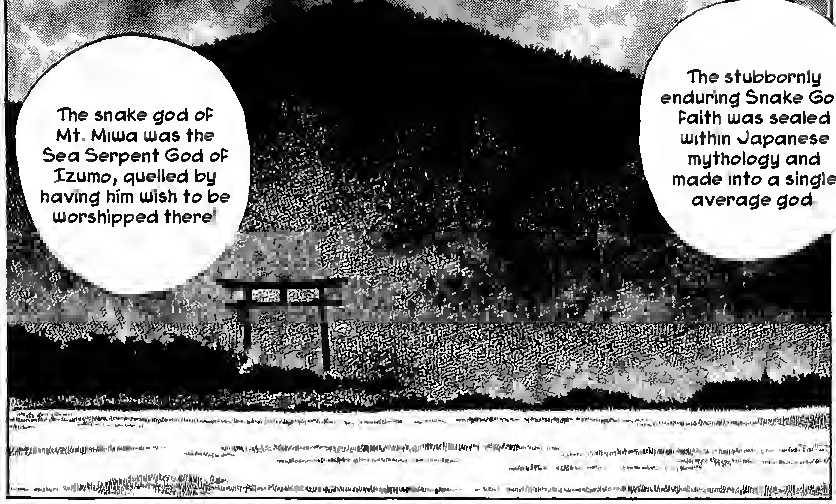

To incorporate him into the mythology in a more manageable form!


I...I don't understand! Why would they...?

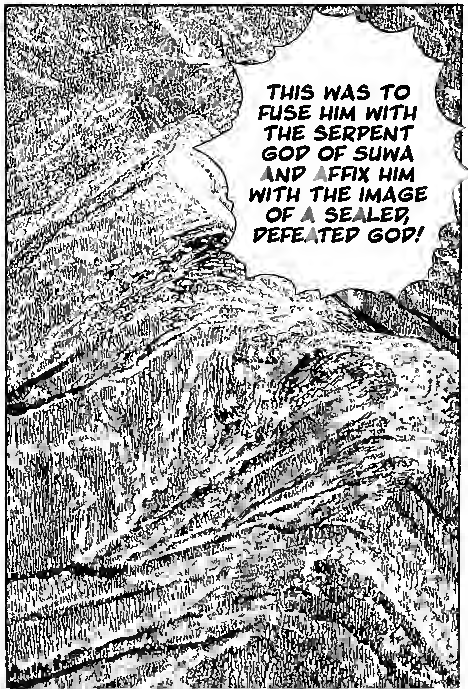

The Jomon snake-god faith was old and deep-rooted...
This was something that the Imperial Court, in its infancy, would have wanted to seal away.

The compilation of the Kojiki and Nihon Shoki was an enterprise to unite and organize all the various gods across the nation.
They would create new myths where necessary, and falsify myths that were inconvenient to them!


The vestiges of this faith still can be seen today. Some say that the Kagami Rice Cakes of New Year's are patterned after a snake.
"Kagami" comes from "Kaka", the ancient word for snakes. They say that Kukedo of Kaga and the Province of Kaga also come from this root...
The scare-crow, or Kakashi, has the same etymology, and some say that its one-legged form represents a snake.

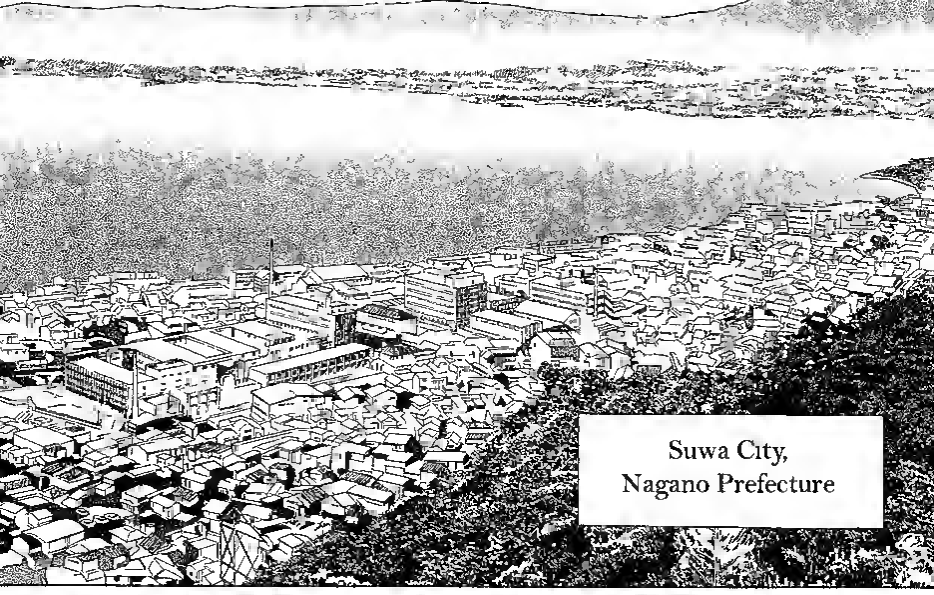

The snake god of Mt. Miwa was the Sea Serpent God of Izumo, quelled by having him wish to be worshipped there!
The stubbornly enduring Snake God faith was sealed within Japanese mythology and made into a single average god

THE MYTH OF TAKEMINAKATA HAD THE SAME PURPOSE!

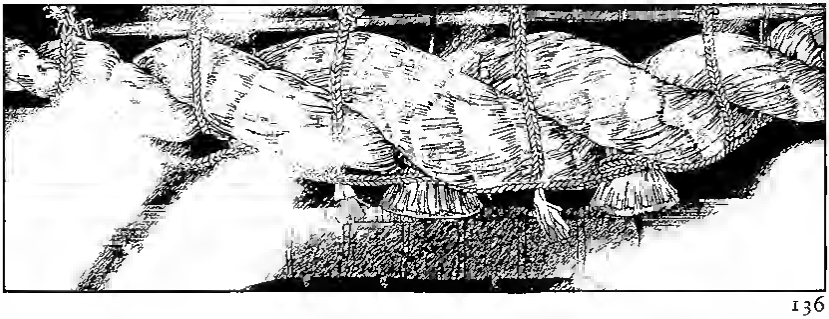

THIS WAS TO FUSE HIM WITH THE SERPENT GOD OF SUWA AND AFFIX HIM WITH THE IMAGE OF A SEALED, DEFEATED GOD!

Takeminakata was defeated by a god of Takamagahara, rendered to a serpentine form, and made to vow that he would not leave Suwa...

The Yatsugatake Mountain Range and Suwa were the most flourishing regions of the middle Jomon period...
AND THEIR SERPENT GOD THAT PRESERVED THEIR THREAD OF LIFE WAS NAMED "MISHAGUCHI"...
THIS WAS THE OLDEST SNAKE GOD IN JAPAN.

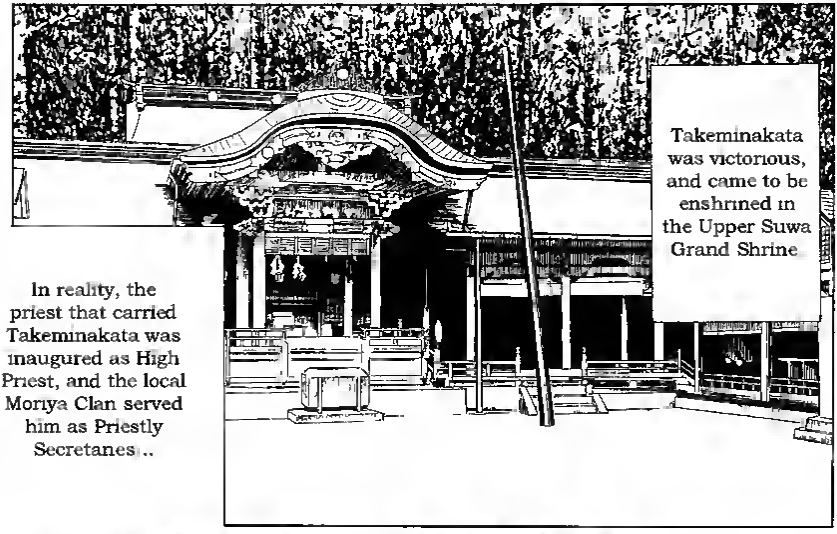


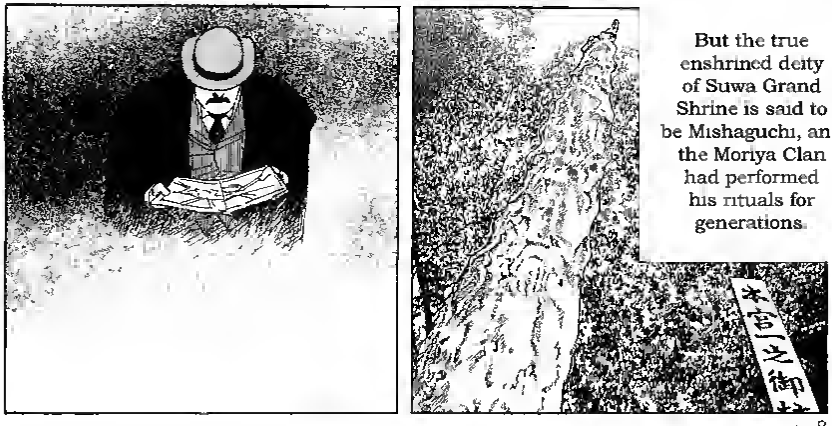
Suwa City,
Nagano Prefecture



Kiriga-
mine...

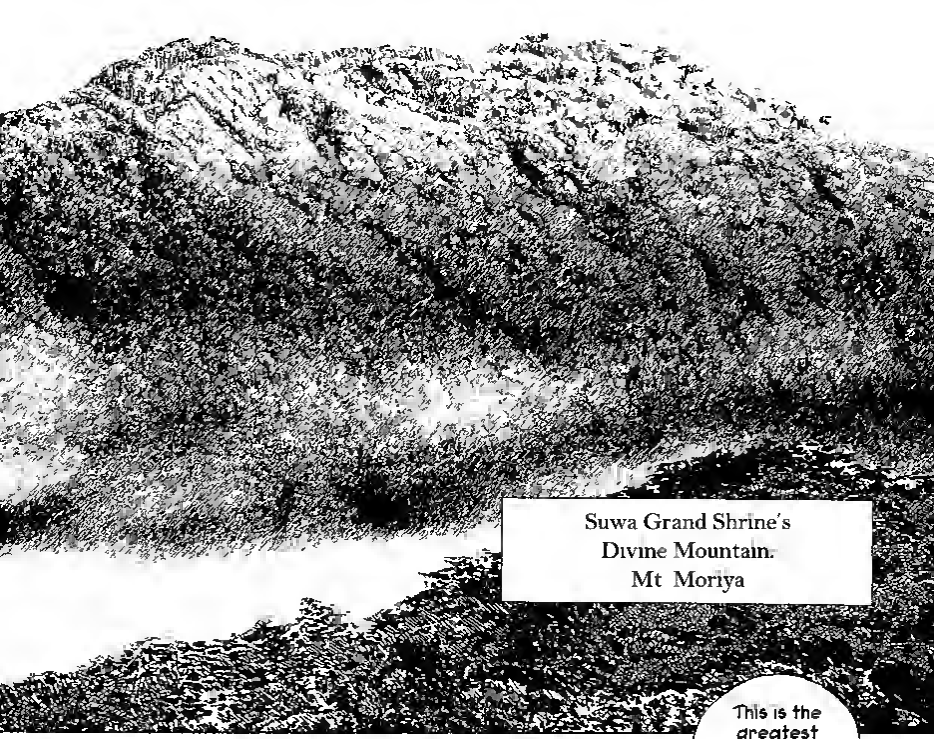
According to the legends of Suwa, a god named Takeminakata suddenly invaded Suwa one day, and the local "God of Moreya" did battle with him.

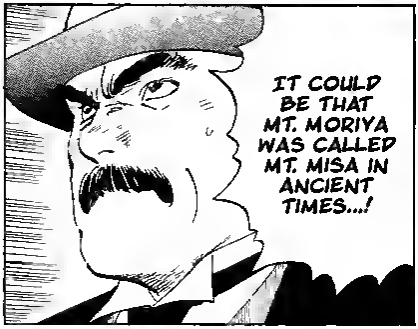

Takeminakata was victorious, and came to be enshrined in the Upper Suwa Grand Shrine.
In reality, the priest that carried Takeminakata was inaugured as High Priest, and the local Moriya Clan served him as Priestly Secretanes...

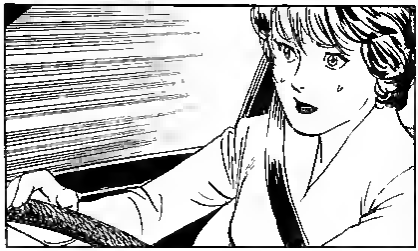

But the true enshrined deity of Suwa Grand Shrine is said to be Mishaguchi, and the Moriya Clan had performed his rituals for generations.

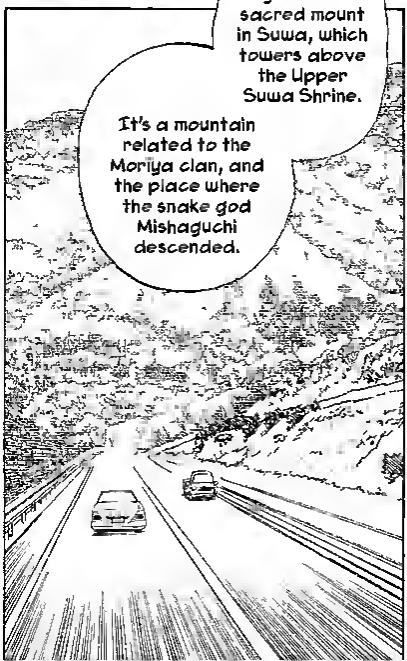
If Rindo and Ike were following this "Mishaguchi", where could they be now...?
Given place names like Shakujii, there is a theory that Mishaguchi was also a god of stone.
Others say that it is read as "shakuchi", and a reference to the snake known as the Red Jimuguri.
Mt. Misa...
But I regard it as the divine mountain that was spread across the nation, transferred as a set with the Suwa Shrine, the god of "Mt. Misa"...

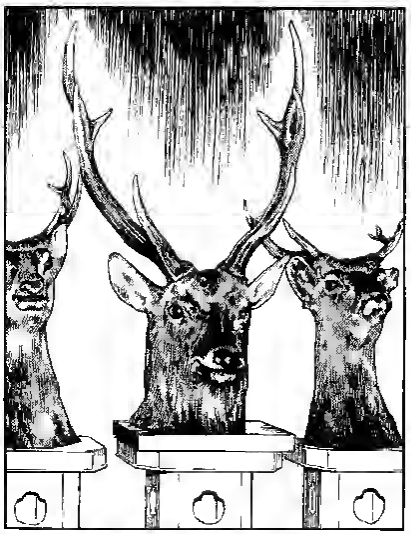
LET'S JUST GO ANYWAY! IF SOMETHING HAPPENED TO THEM, WE CAN'T JUST STAY HERE...
I asked the locals, but they said there was only one part of Kirigamine that was called Mt. Misa, and it's not even a feature you could call a mountain...
But there is no such mountain with that name!
...I'M JUST SO WORRIED... THEY'VE BEEN MISSING FOR THREE WHOLE DAYS...
WE COULD TAKE THE WRONG PATH IF WE'RE TOO HASTY! LET'S JUST THINK FOR A MINUTE!
...I guess it's worth a shot...

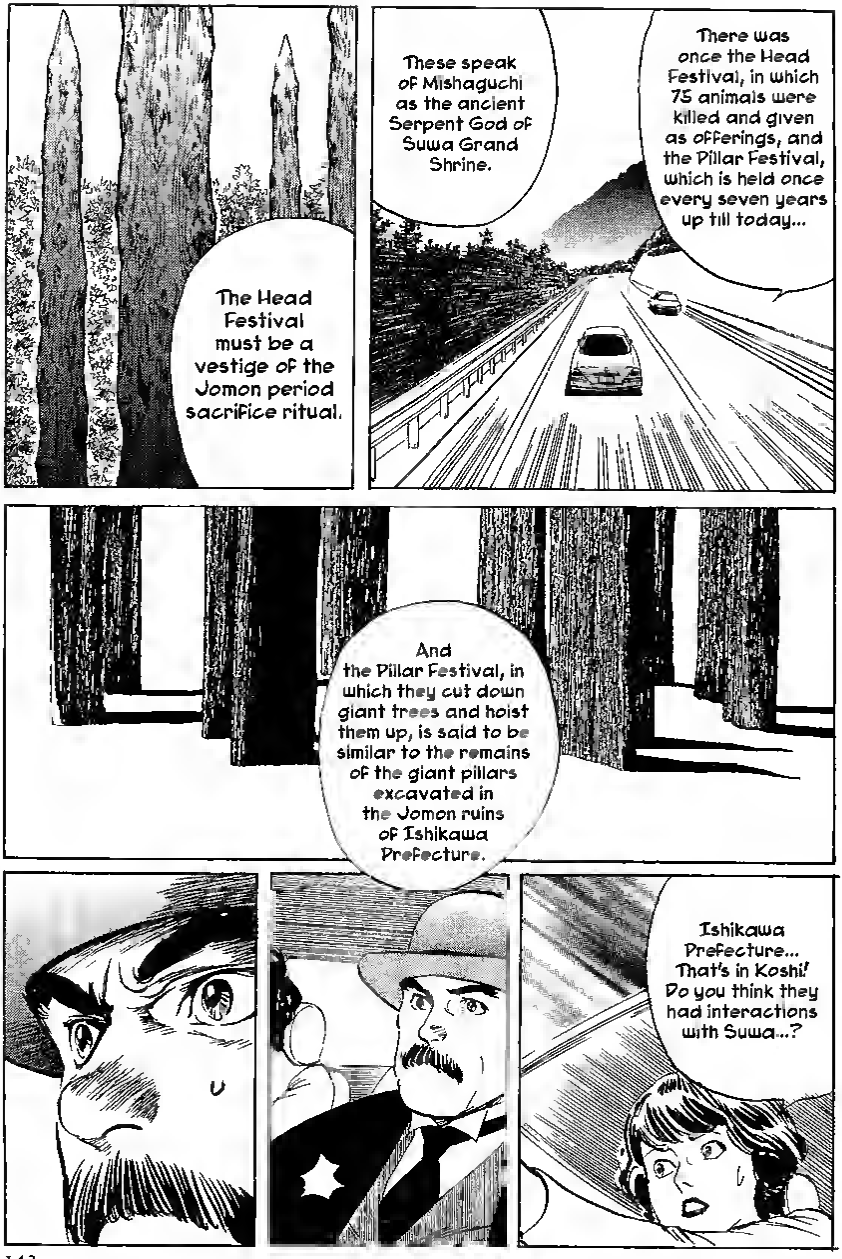

Suwa Grand Shrine's
Divine Mountain.
Mt Moriya


IT COULD BE THAT MT. MORIYA WAS CALLED MT. MISA IN ANCIENT TIMES...!




This is the greatest sacred mount in Suwa, which towers above the Upper Suwa Shrine.
It's a mountain related to the Moriya clan, and the place where the snake god Mishaguchi descended.

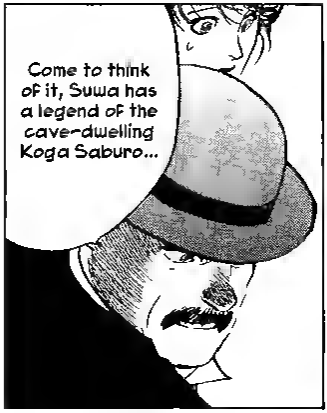


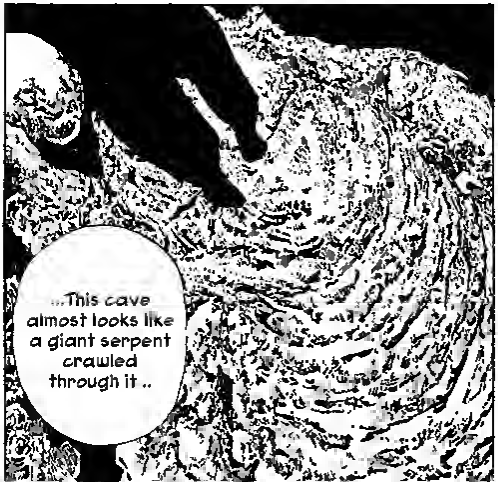

The Head Festival must be a vestige of the Jomon period sacrifice ritual.
These speak of Mishaguchi as the ancient Serpent God of Suwa Grand Shrine.
There was once the Head Festival, in which 75 animals were killed and given as offerings, and the Pillar Festival, which is held once every seven years up till today...
And the Pillar Festival, in which they cut down giant trees and hoist them up, is said to be similar to the remains of the giant pillars excavated in the Jomon ruins of Ishikawa Prefecture.
Ishikawa Prefecture... That's in Koshi! Do you think they had interactions with Suwa...?

...I SEE NOW! "KOSHI-NO-YAGUCHI"...!
WHOA...!?

SO THEY WERE ON MT. MORIYA AFTER ALL...!
T...THIS IS IT! I'VE FOUND RINDO'S LICENSE PLATE, PROFESSOR MUNAKATA!!
I'LL TAKE A LOOK AROUND WHILE YOU'RE GONE!
CALL THE POLICE AND ANYONE WHO CAN GIVE US A HAND! WE MAY NEED SOME ROPE AND FLASH-LIGHTS!

They're in the shape of birds nowadays, but the older they are, the more similar their shape is to snakes.
It's a scythe called a "Nagikama". It's an iron marker that's thrust into special trees, even in the Pillar Festival.
HEYYY YYYY! IS ANY-BODY THERE?
HEYY YYYY YY!
...LET'S FOLLOW THE TREES WITH NAGIKAMA IN THEM...


Come to think of it, Suwa has a legend of the cave-dwelling Koga Saburo...


...This cave almost looks like a giant serpent crawled through it ..

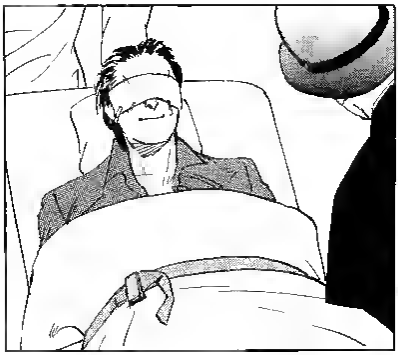
They say that Koga Saburo wandered a deep, deep cave for many years, until finally he became a snake...
EEK...

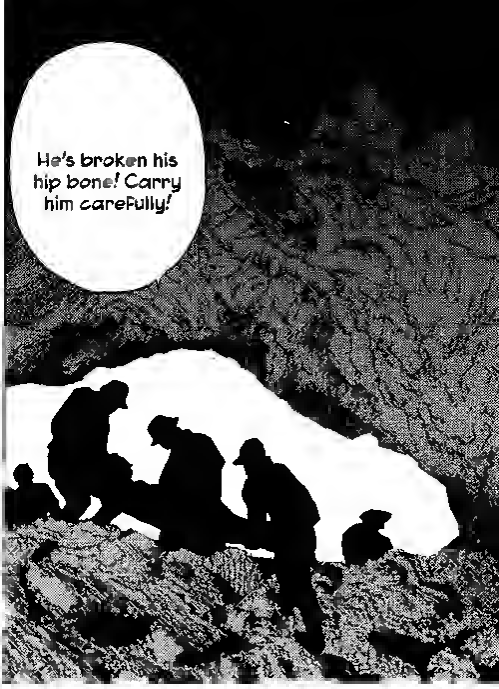
I FOUND FOOT-PRINTS! THEY'RE SMALL... MUST BE A WOMAN'S!
IKE! RINDO!!
IKE! RINDO! WHERE ARE YOU? ANSWER ME!!

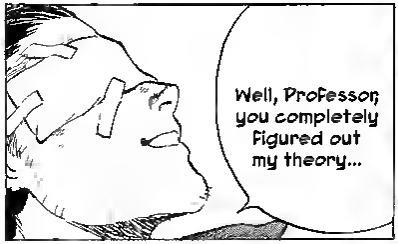
WAKE UP!!
IKE!! WHERE ARE YOU!?

HELP ME, PROFESSOR MUNAKATA!!
D...
PRO-FES-SOR!

B...-Bones...
IS THAT MISHAGUCHI...!?
It's Yaguchi!
Yaguchi of Mt. Misa!
The snake god of Suwa that fused with the myth of Takeminakata and was forgotten underground...!

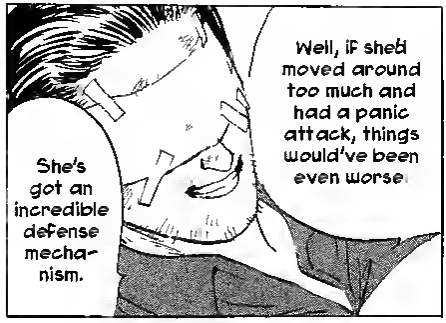



He's broken his hip bone! Carry him carefully!

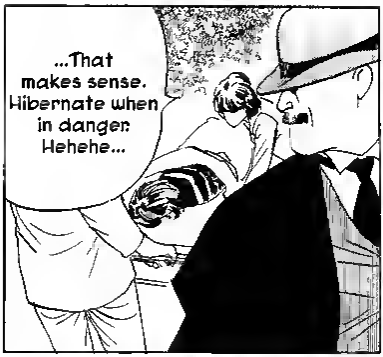

Well, Professor, you completely figured out my theory...

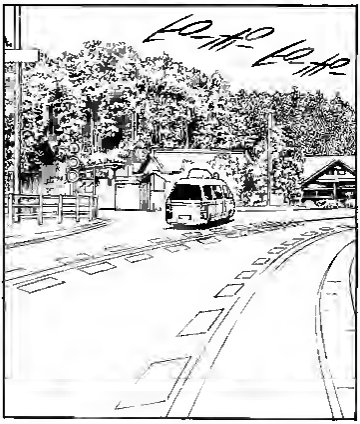
Zzz...

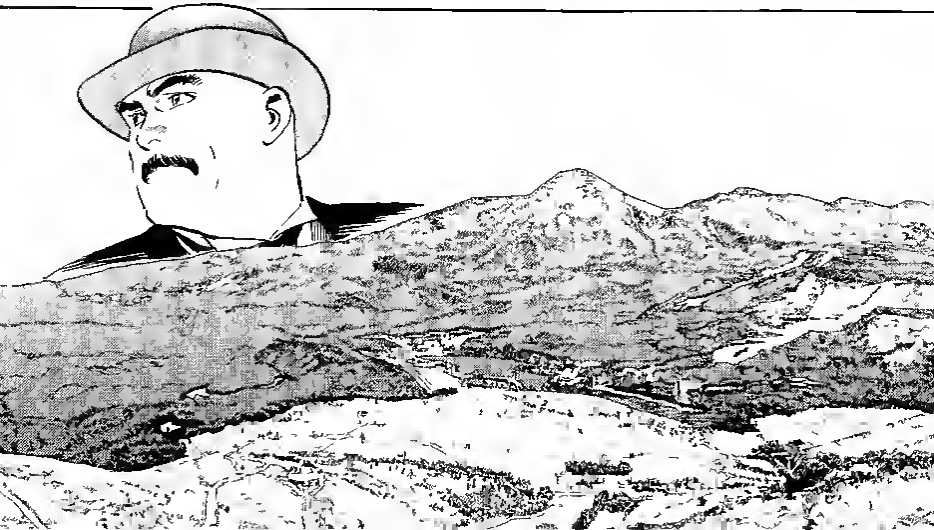
But I'm rather impressed by Ike. She was in a sacrifice site, and practically slept through the whole thing...
Set a snake to catch a snake, as they say.

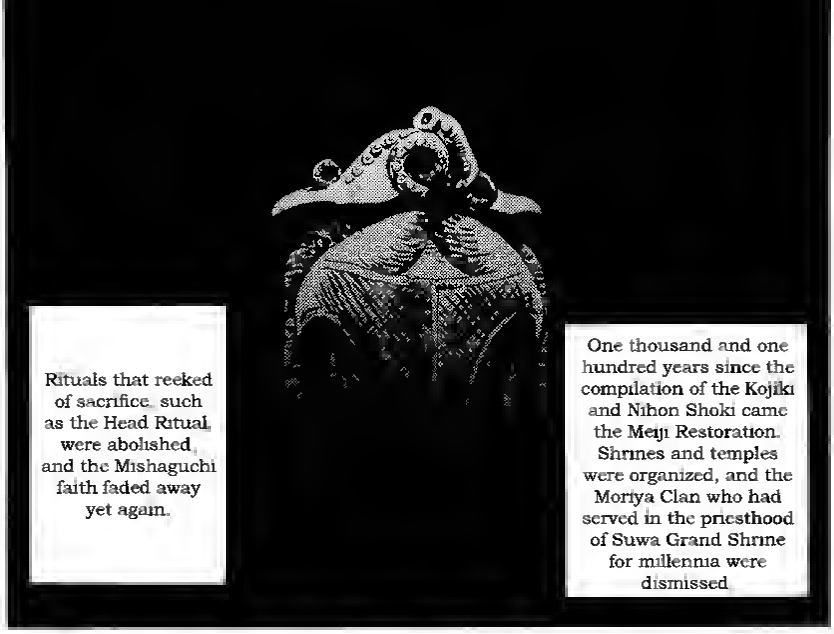

Well, if she'd moved around too much and had a panic attack, things would've been even worse.
She's got an incredible defense mechanism.

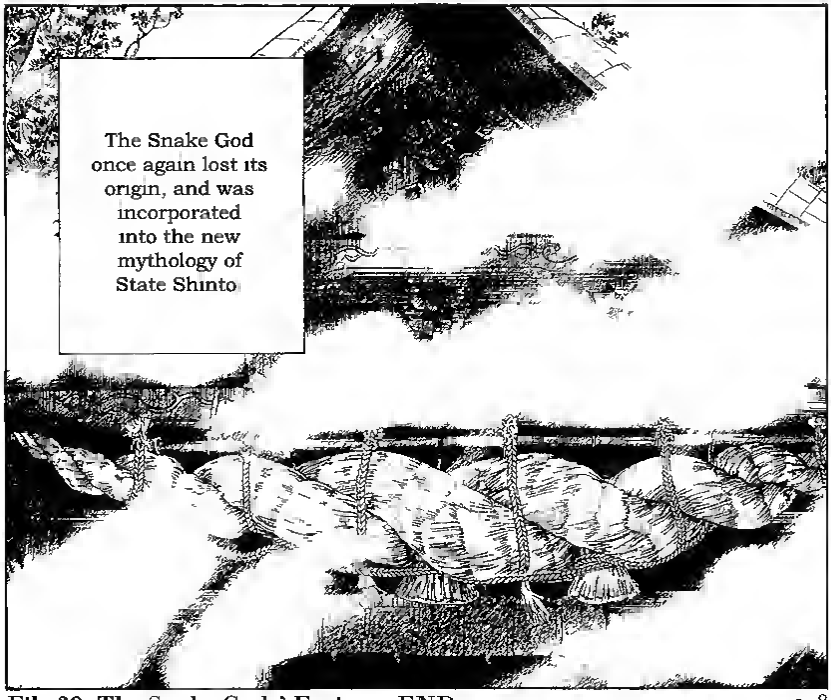
Zzz
z...


...That makes sense. Hibernate when in danger. Hehehe...





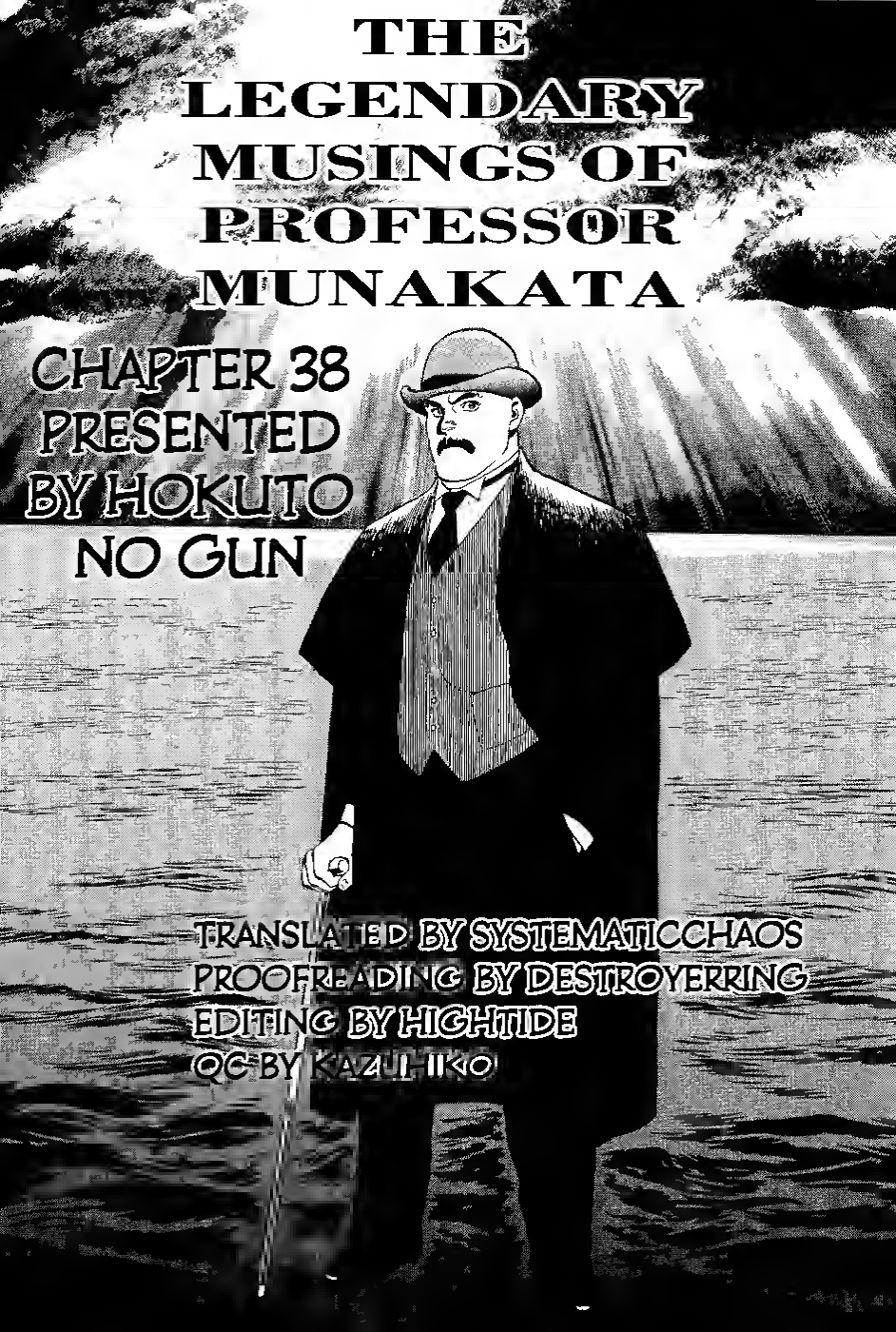

Rituals that reeked of sacrifice, such as the Head Ritual, were abolished, and the Mishaguchi faith faded away yet again.
One thousand and one hundred years since the compilation of the Kojiki and Nihon Shoki came the Meiji Restoration. Shrines and temples were organized, and the Moriya Clan who had served in the priesthood of Suwa Grand Shrine for millennia were dismissed.


The Snake God once again lost its origin, and was incorporated into the new mythology of State Shinto.

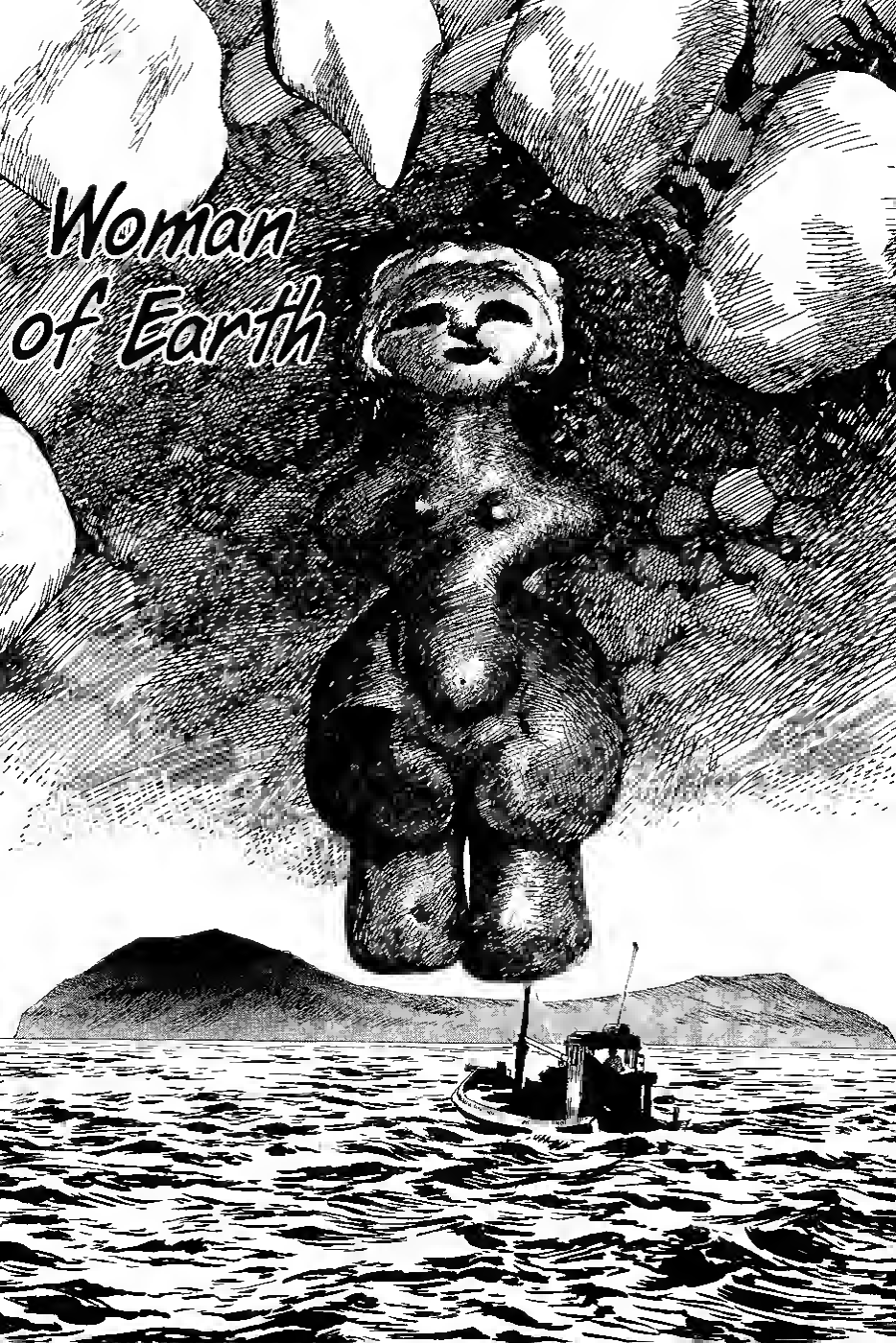
THE LEGENDARY MUSINGS OF PROFESSOR MUNAKATA

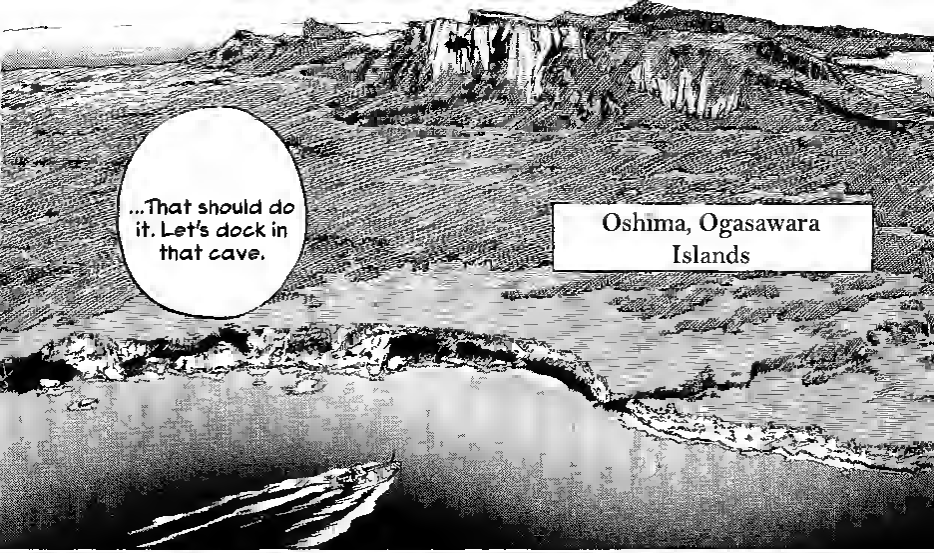
CHAPTER 38

PRESENTED BY HOKUTO NO GUN

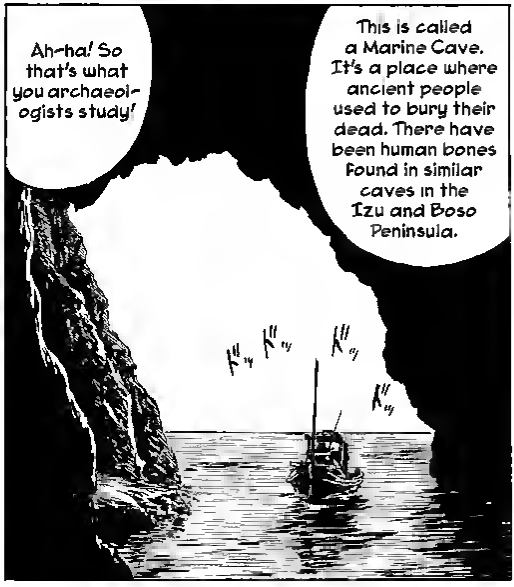


TRANSLATED BY SYSTEMATICCHAOS
PROOFREADING BY DESTROYERRING
EDITING BY HIGHTIDE
QC BY KAZUHIKO


Woman
of Earth

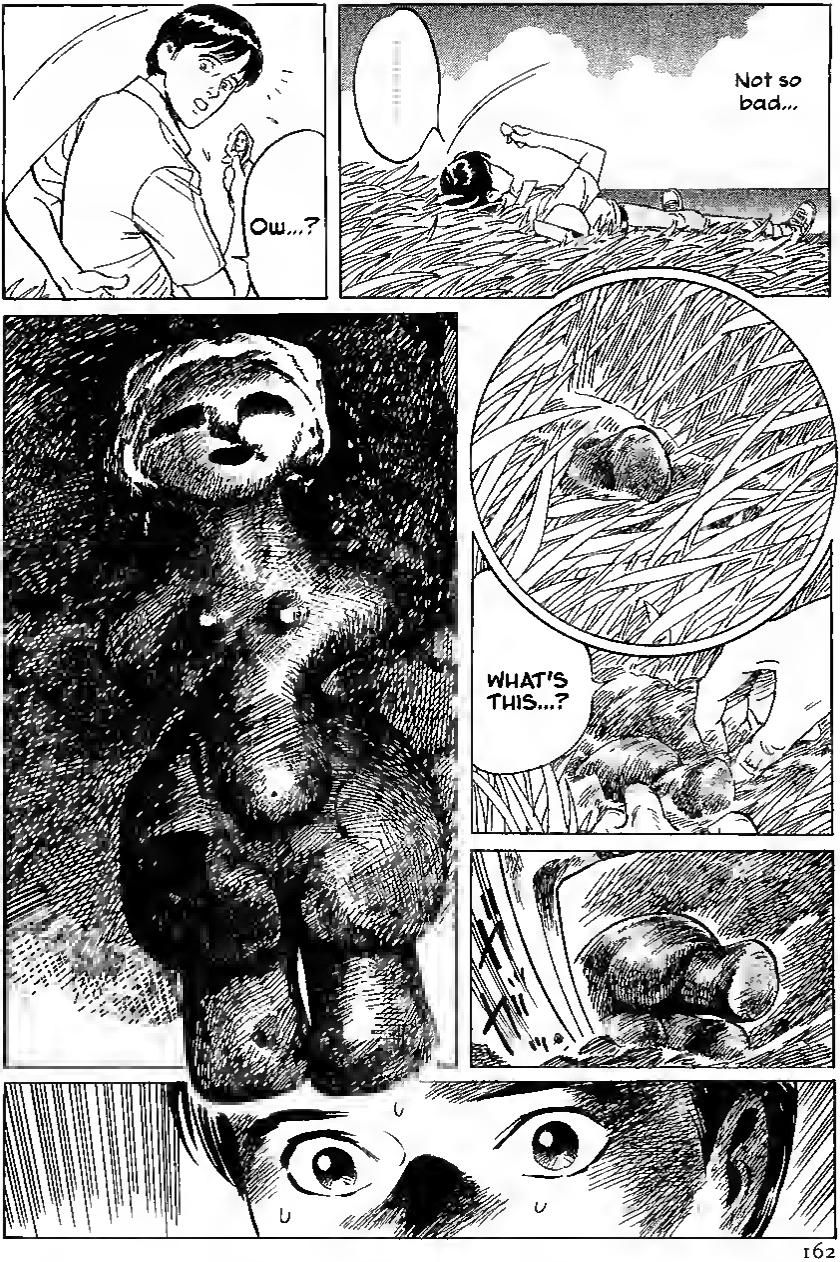

...That should do it. Let's dock in that cave.
Oshima, Ogasawara Islands

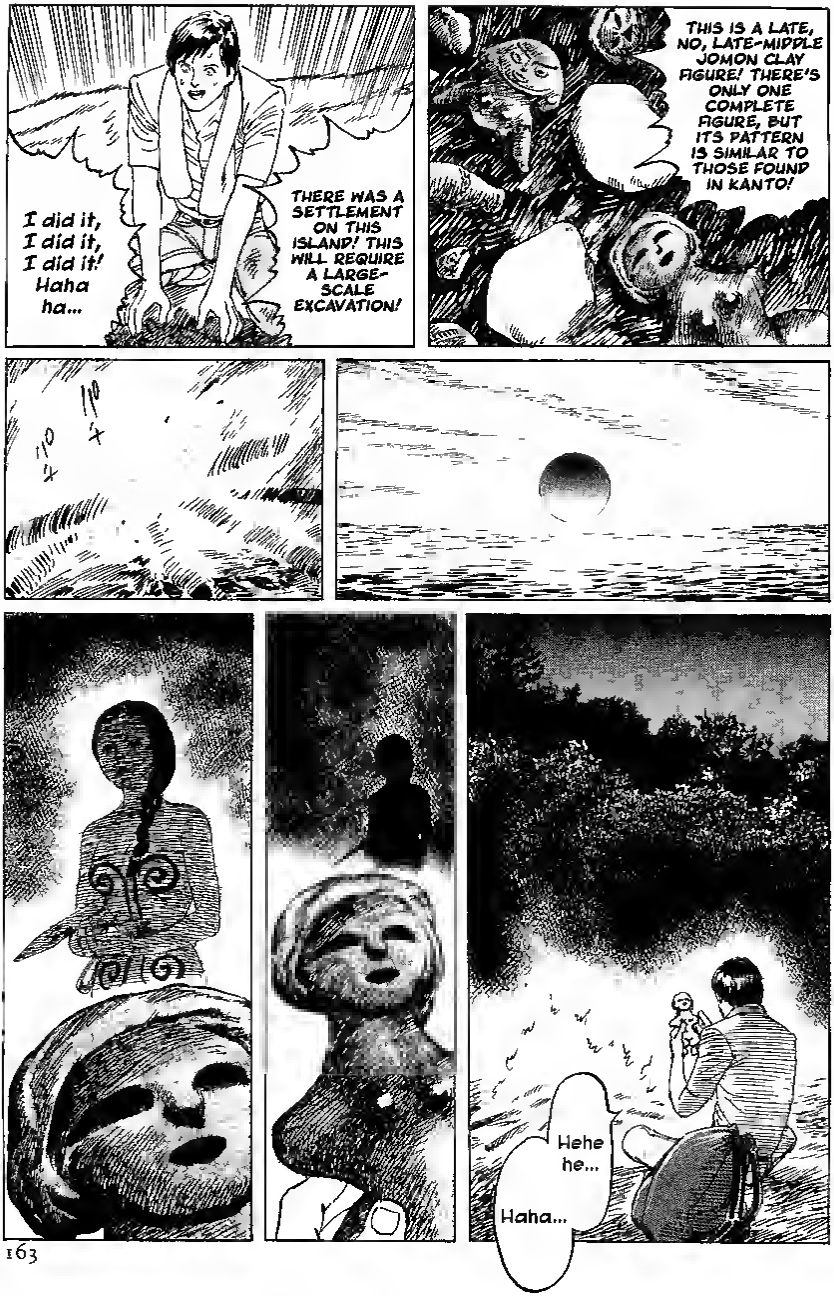
Be back here in a week... I've got to go back to grad school the day after that.
Are you really gonna be alright on your own? I promise I'll be back for you...


Ah-ha! So that's what you archaeologists study!
This is called a Marine Cave. It's a place where ancient people used to bury their dead. There have been human bones found in similar caves in the Izu and Boso Peninsula.

Archaeology on an uninhabited island, huh...

I'm going to excavate something on this small, uninhabited island that no one could have predicted... Of course, it'll be a major find, it'll be the talk of the town, and I may even become famous...
Then I can leave that gloomy professor speechless... and my girlfriend might come back to me...
I guess just taking a week-long break on an uninhabited island is not so bad..
But oh, well. It's not like anything's going to turn up.


Ow...?
Not so bad...
WHAT'S THIS...?


I did it, I did it, I did it! Haha ha...
THERE WAS A SETTLEMENT ON THIS ISLAND! THIS WILL REQUIRE A LARGE-SCALE EXCAVATION!
THIS IS A LATE, NO, LATE-MIDDLE JOMON CLAY FIGURE! THERE'S ONLY ONE COMPLETE FIGURE, BUT ITS PATTERN IS SIMILAR TO THOSE FOUND IN KANTO!
Hehe he...
Haha...

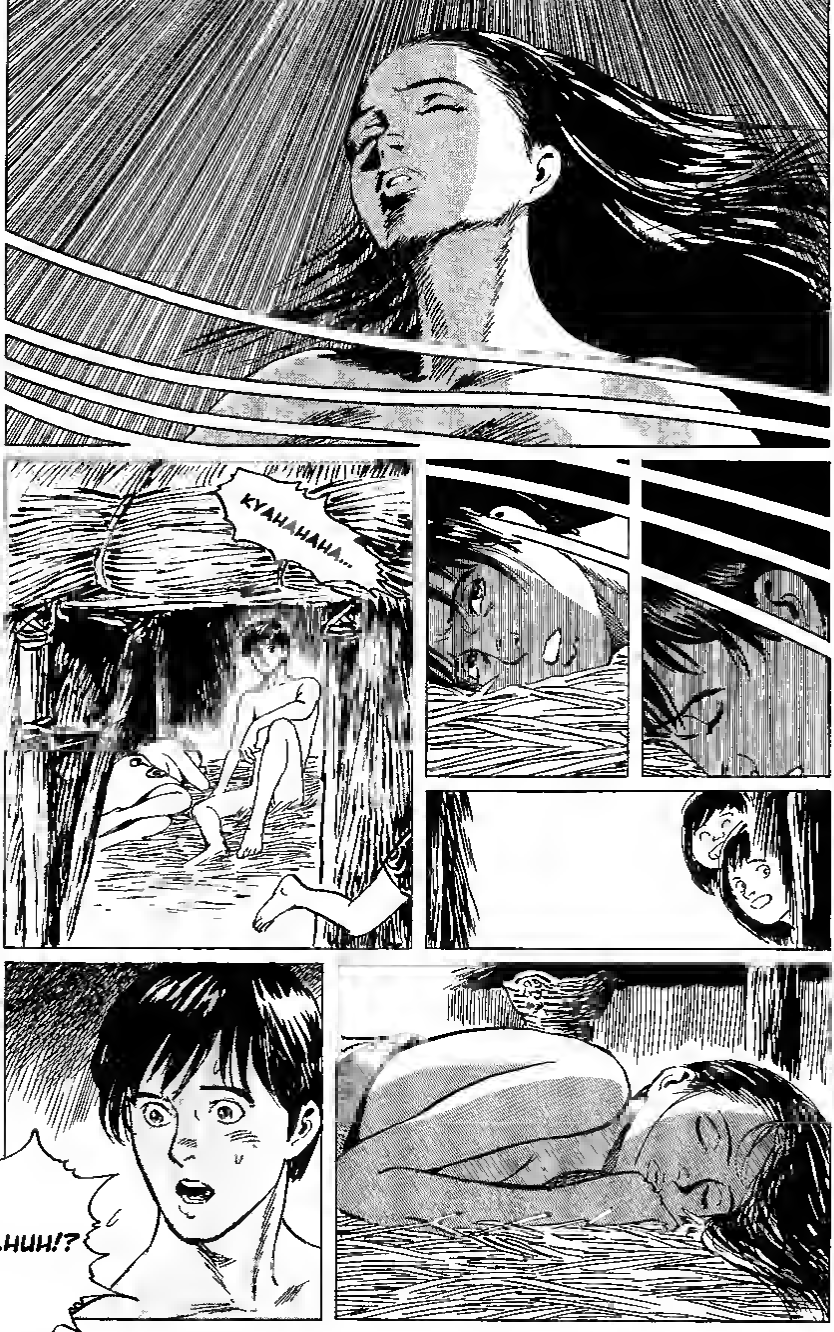
ヒヒ

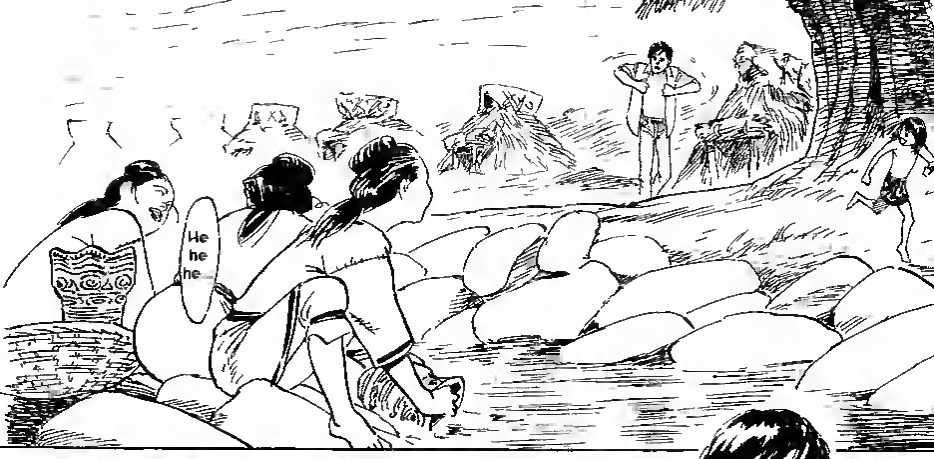
WHO WAS THAT GIRL? AND WHAT WAS SHE DOING HERE...!?
JOMON CLAY FIGURE? UNINHABITED ISLAND? WHAT A LOAD OF BULLSHIT!

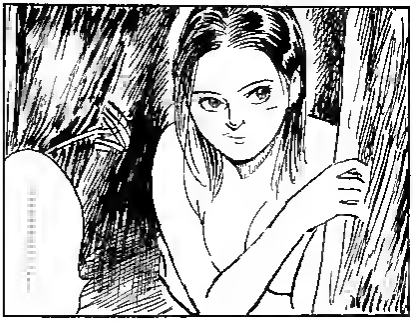
I...I DIDN'T SEE THIS PLACE THIS MORNING... WAIT! HEY...
WHAT'S GOING ON HERE!? CAN'T YOU HEAR ME!?

You're that girl...
!!
D...DO YOU REMEMBER ME!?
!?

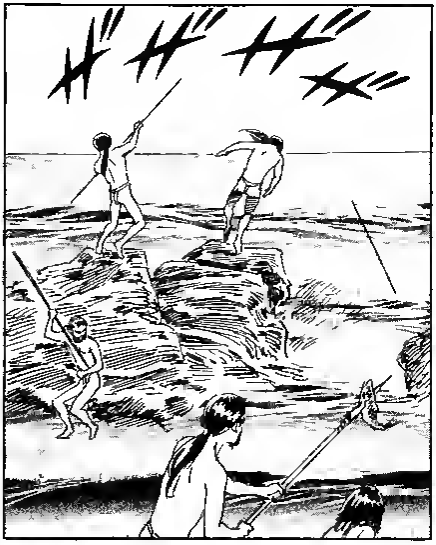
W... WHAT THE HELL!?
WAIT! WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU SAYING!?
!!
!!
AH... HEY!

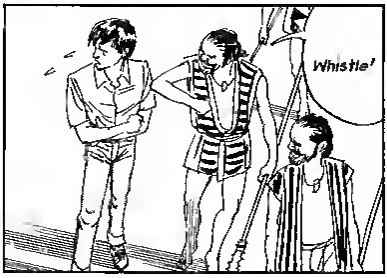

KYAHAHAHA...
...HUH!?


He he he

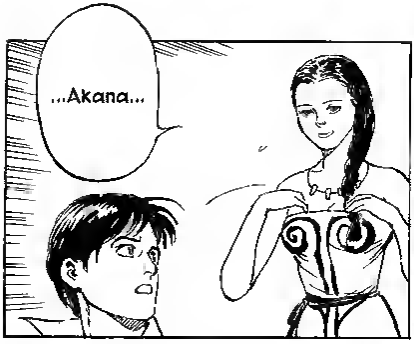


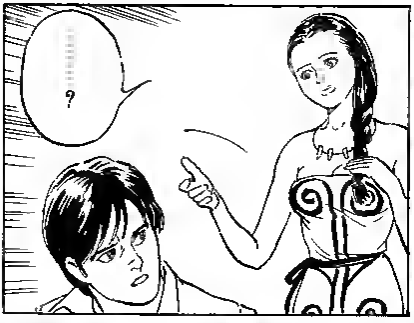
OK?

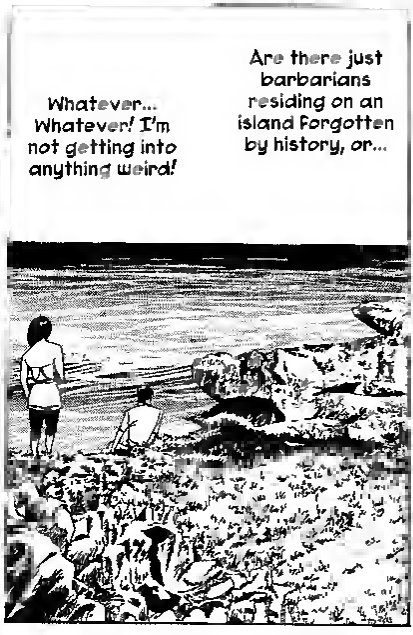


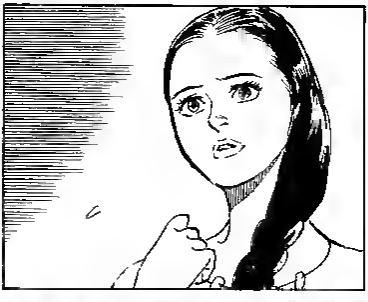

Whistle!

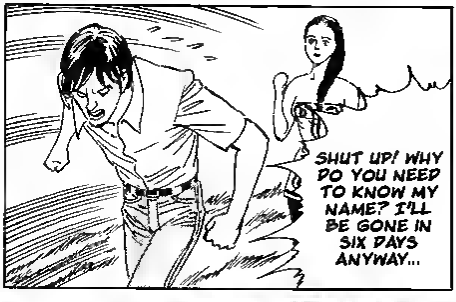
Why is this happening...!?
What's going on...?

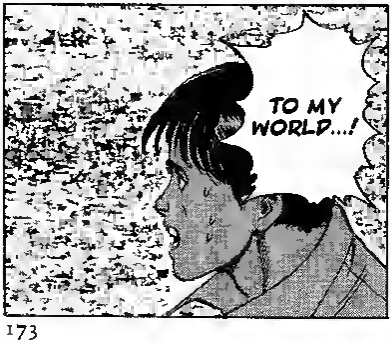

...Akana...


?


Whatever... Whatever! I'm not getting into anything weird!
Are there just barbarians residing on an island forgotten by history, or...



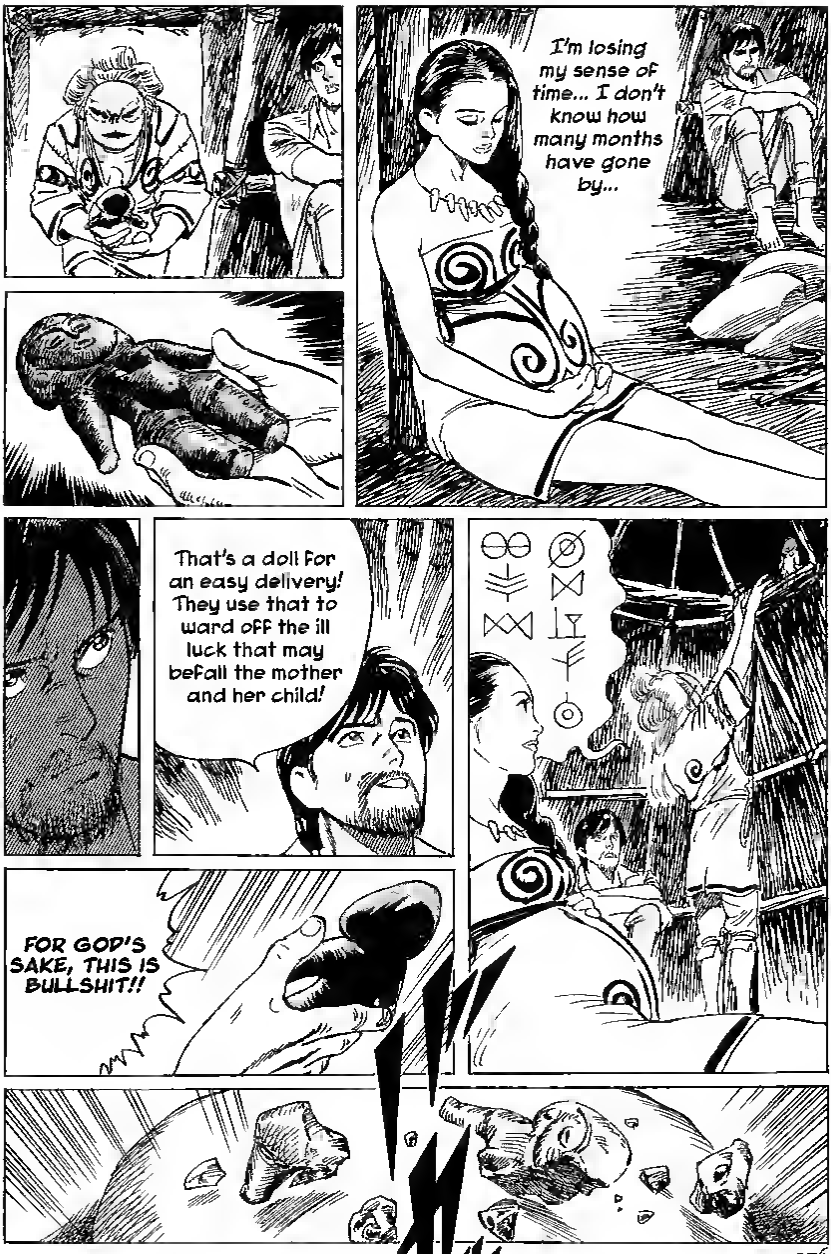

SHUT UP! WHY DO YOU NEED TO KNOW MY NAME? I'LL BE GONE IN SIX DAYS ANYWAY...

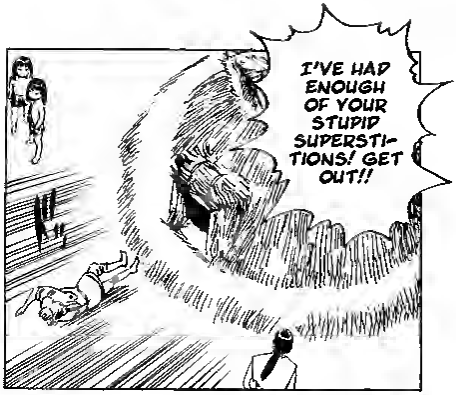

TO MY WORLD...!

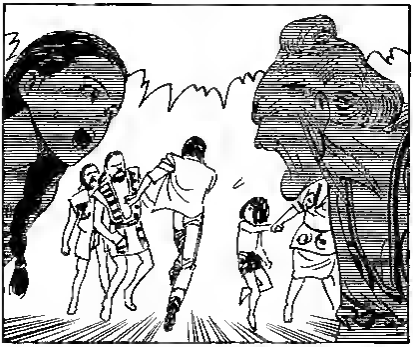
ONCE MY BOAT COMES, I CAN LEAVE THIS ISLAND! I CAN GO BACK TO MY WORLD!

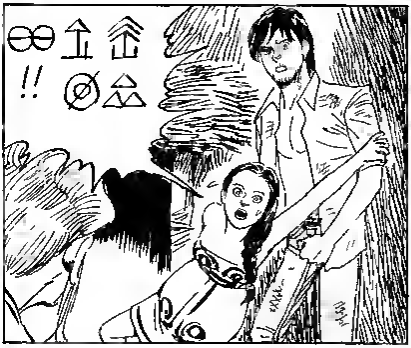
Ten days passed
WHAT DO I DO ABOUT WORK? WHAT ABOUT MY LIFE!? DAMMIT! DAMMIT!
WHY ISN'T IT COMING!?
WHY HASN'T MY BOAT COME YET!? IT'S BEEN LONG PAST THE WEEK HE PROMISED ME!

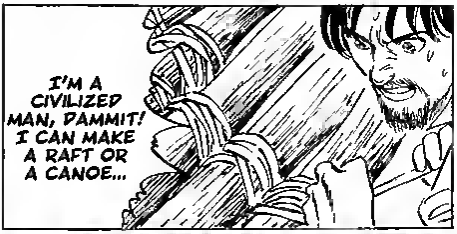
Three months passed...

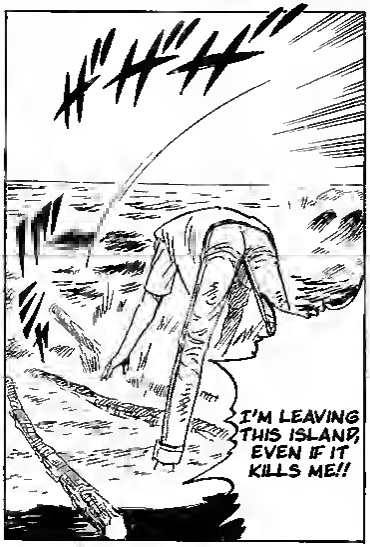

I'm losing my sense of time... I don't know how many months have gone by...
That's a doll for an easy delivery! They use that to ward off the ill luck that may befall the mother and her child!
FOR GOD'S SAKE, THIS IS BULLSHIT!!

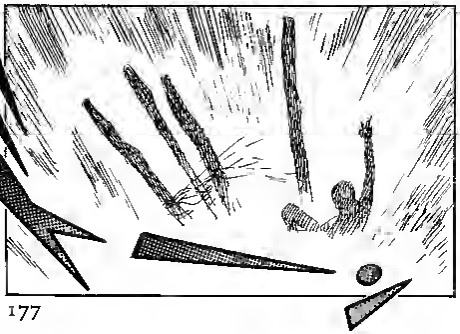

I'VE HAD ENOUGH OF YOUR STUPID SUPERSTI-TIONS! GET OUT!!





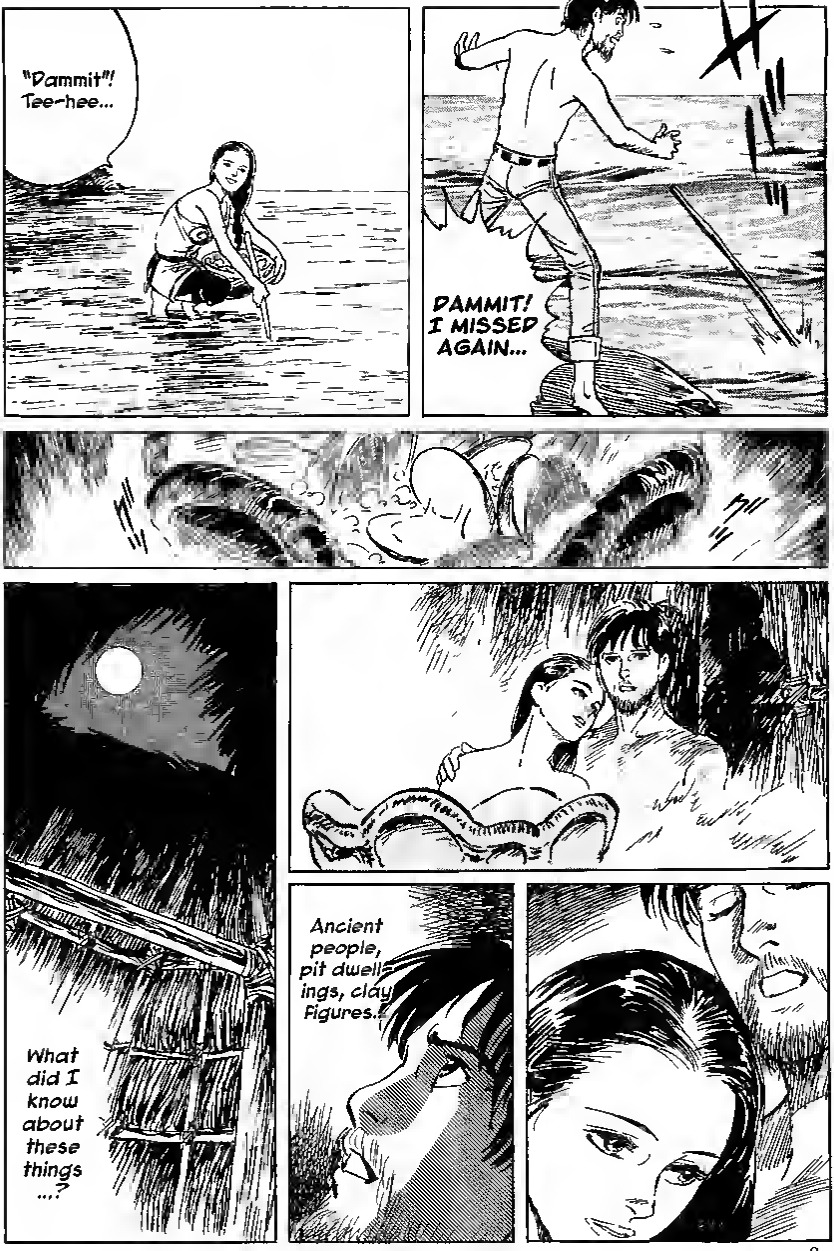

I'M A CIVILIZED MAN, DAMMIT! I CAN MAKE A RAFT OR A CANOE...


I'M LEAVING THIS ISLAND, EVEN IF IT KILLS ME!!



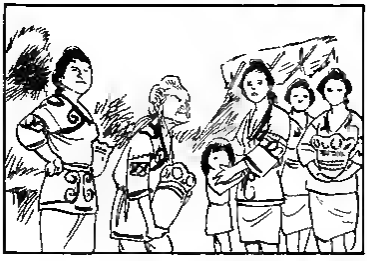
WAAHHHHHH
HHHHHHHHHH!

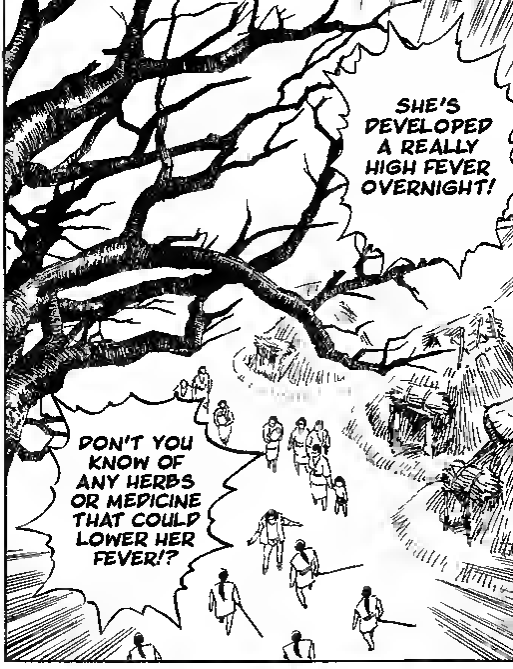
They must have shunned me. They won't even share their food with me...
Go back and join the others, Akana. You don't need to suffer on my account.


"Dammit"! Tee-hee...
DAMMIT! I MISSED AGAIN...
What did I know about these things ...?
Ancient people, pit dwellings, clay figures..?

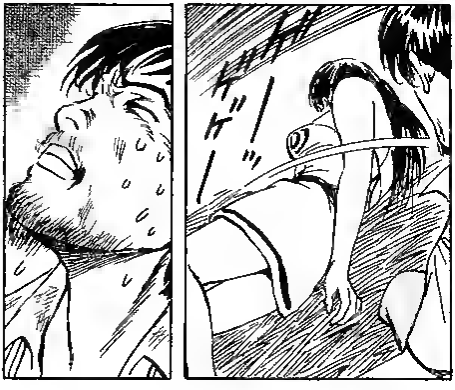
AKANA!!
I DID IT, AKANA! LOOK...
Akana ...?
HUFF... HUFF... HUFF...
HUFF... HUFF...

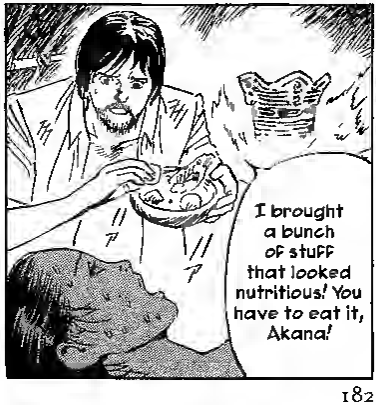
PLEASE, SOMEBODY, HELP AKANA...!!




SHE'S DEVELOPED A REALLY HIGH FEVER OVERNIGHT!
DON'T YOU KNOW OF ANY HERBS OR MEDICINE THAT COULD LOWER HER FEVER!?

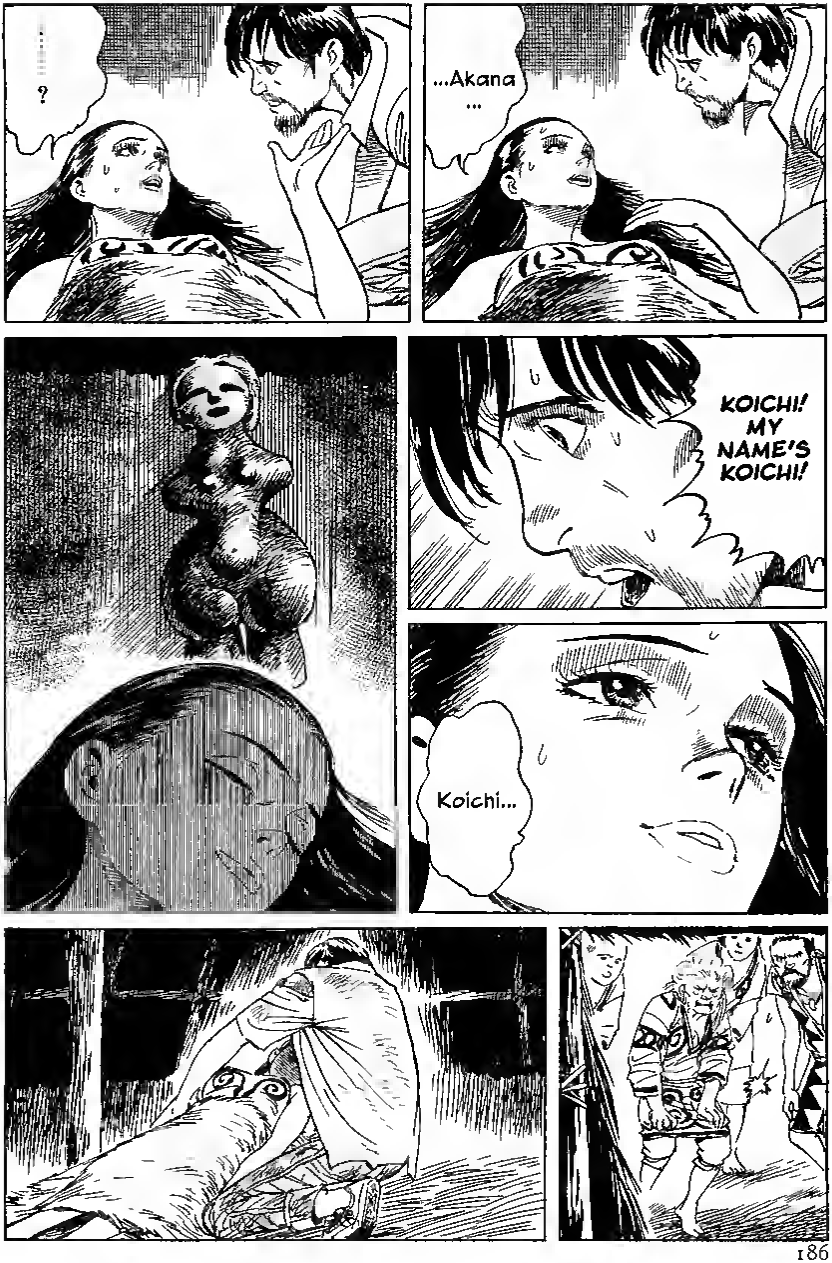
GODDAMMIT, WHAT HERBS DO I NEED...!?




I brought a bunch of stuff that looked nutritious! You have to eat it, Akana!

On the fourth day...
THERE'S NOTHING I CAN DO... NOT A SINGLE GODDAMN THING I CAN DO...!
Huff... Huff... Huff...
She's dying... Akana is dying...!

I don't know how to pray to you! But please! Please! Please! Don't let Akana die!!
TAKE ALL THE ILL-NESS AND SUFFERING FROM AKANA'S BODY! PLEASE! PLEASE!
O CLAY FIGURE, PLEASE TAKE AKANA'S PLACE!
...A...

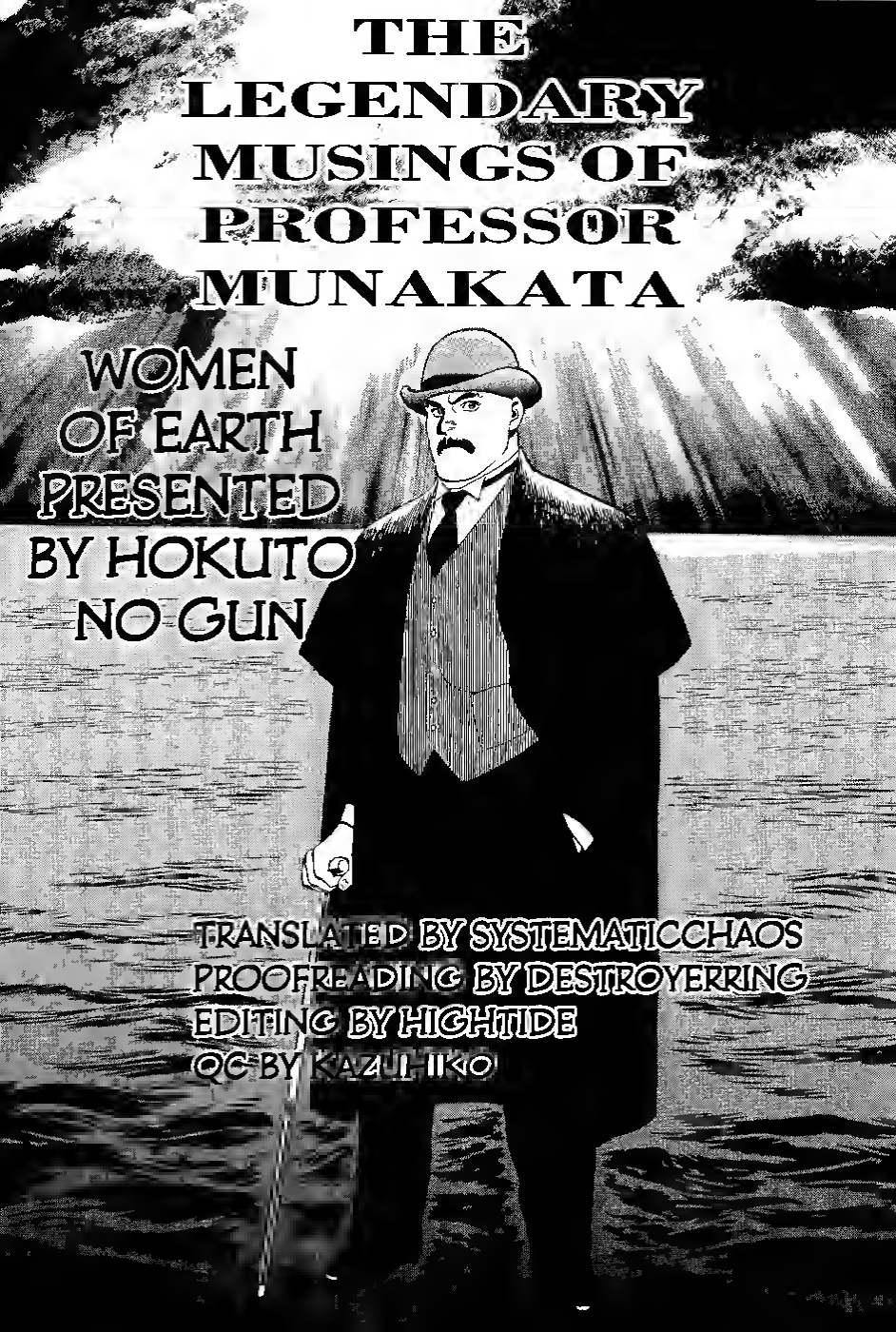

?
...Akana
...
KOICHI! MY NAME'S KOICHI!
Koichi...

AKANAAAAAAAAAAAAA!!

ドッドッドッドッ

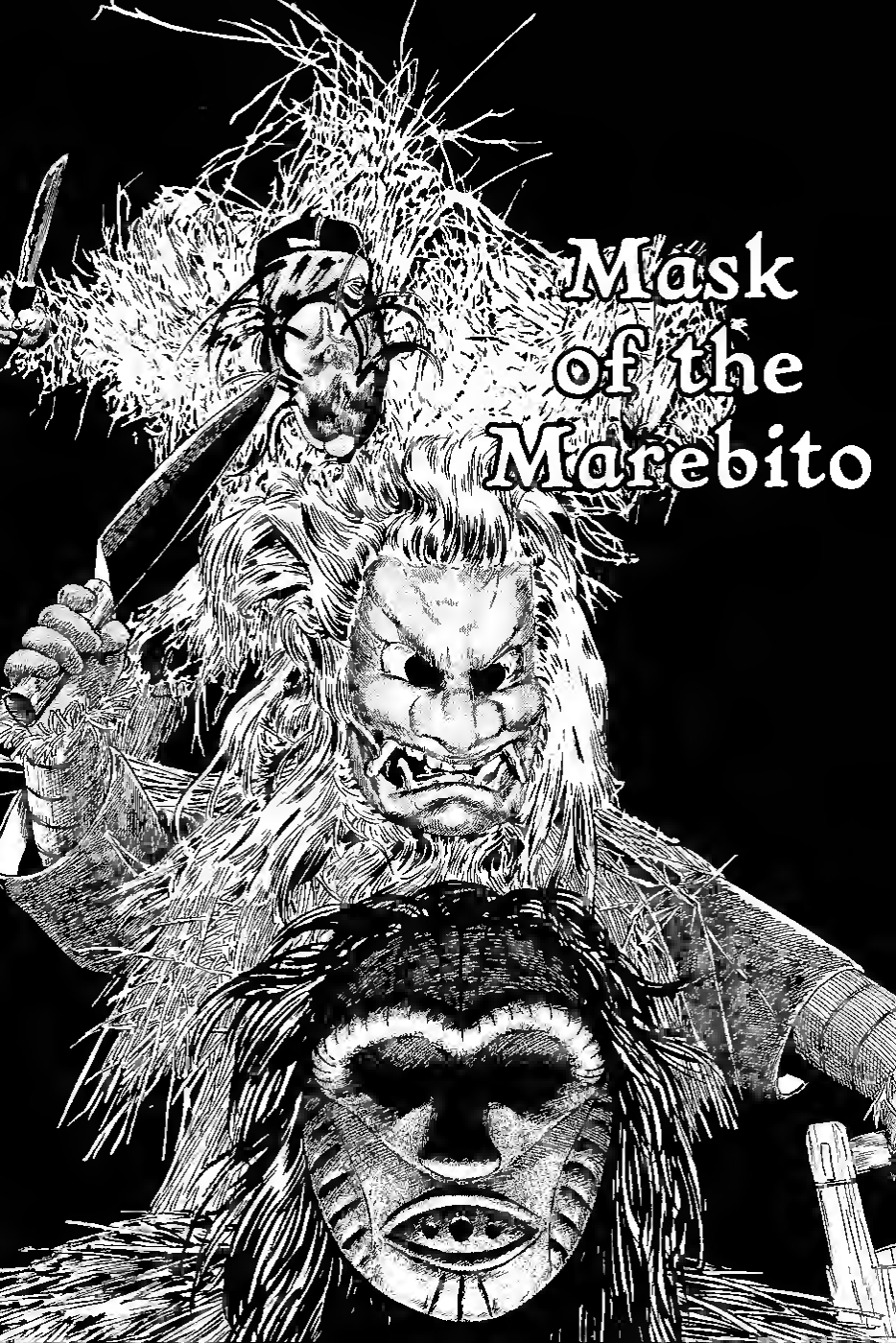
ドッドッドッドッ
HEY, HOPE YOU DIDN'T WAIT TOO LONG, BUT IT'S BEEN A WEEK!

THE LEGENDARY MUSINGS OF PROFESSOR MUNAKATA



WOMEN OF EARTH PRESENTED BY HOKUTO NO GUN

TRANSLATED BY SYSTEMATICCHAOS
PROOFREADING BY DESTROYERRING
EDITING BY HIGHTIDE
QC BY KAZUHIKO


Mask
of the
Marebito

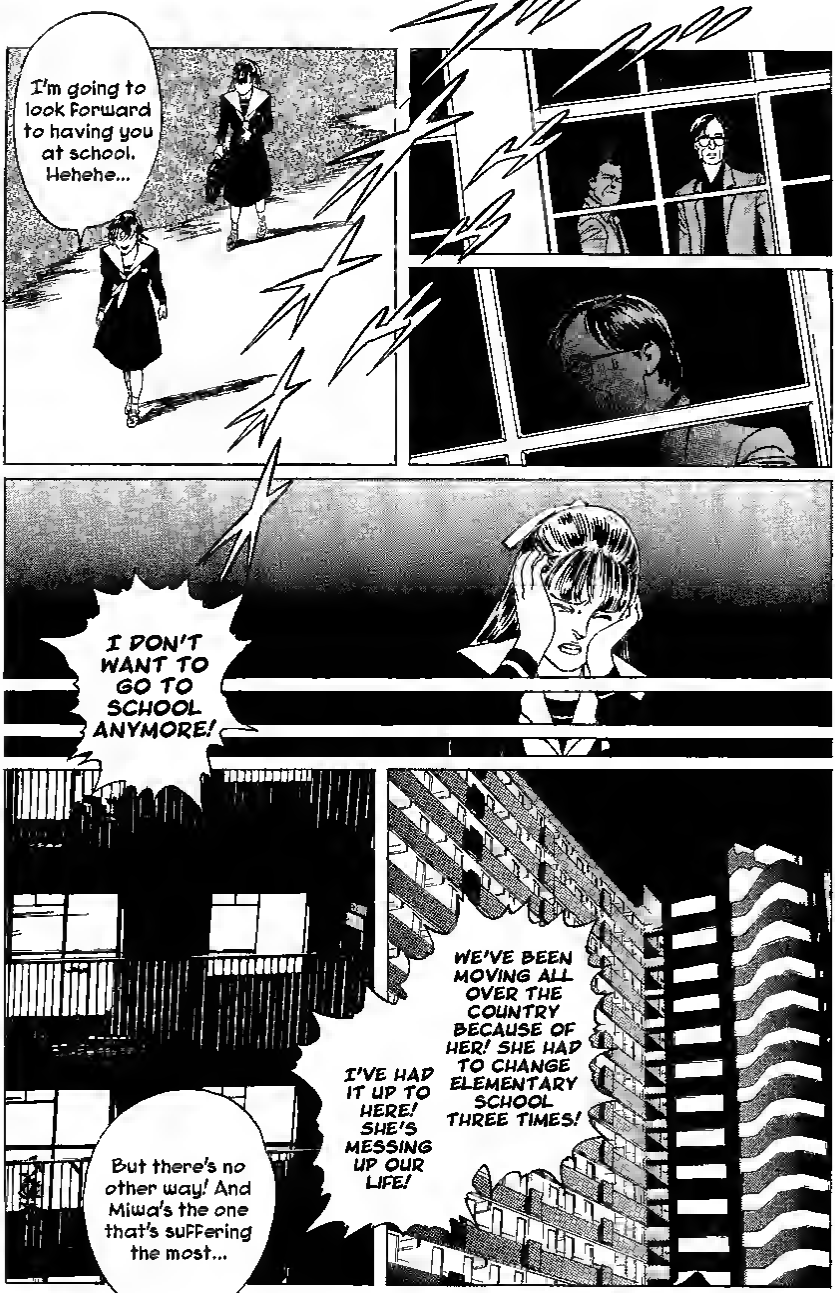
M—— Island is my father's hometown, but he was so young when he left, he could barely remember it.
I never even dreamed that I would live on that same island.
But it's my fault, and I'm sure my father would think so, too

YA-HOOOO!
This is Kimihara Miwa. She just transferred here from Tokyo. I hope you can all get along.
.....

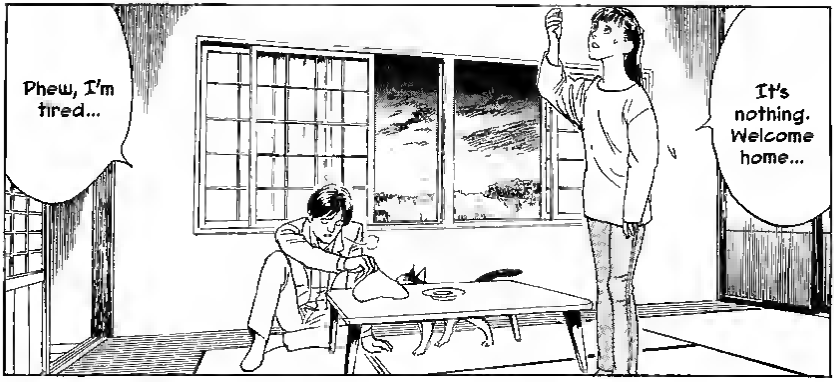
HEY, GET BACK HERE!
HEHEH... LET'S SPLIT, MASATO!
B-KA WWWW-WW!

And you escaped to this island as a last-ditch effort.
I hear you were bullied at your school in Tokyo, huh?
Rumors spread real quick on this island...

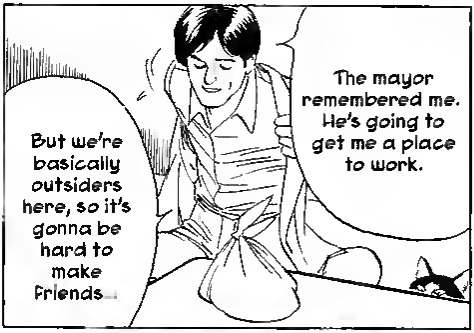
Jiro! Masato!
Hey, Hatsue!
You better take this island seriously!
I'm Samejima Hatsue, and don't you forget it!


I'm going to look forward to having you at school. Hehehe...
I DON'T WANT TO GO TO SCHOOL ANYMORE!
WE'VE BEEN MOVING ALL OVER THE COUNTRY BECAUSE OF HER! SHE HAD TO CHANGE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL THREE TIMES!
I'VE HAD IT UP TO HERE! SHE'S MESSING UP OUR LIFE!
But there's no other way! And Miwa's the one that's suffering the most...

IF YOU INSIST ON LIVING ON THAT SMALL, ISOLATED ISLAND, YOU CAN DO IT YOURSELVES!
...What!?
I went through a lot when I first came to Tokyo... So I think I can understand how Miwa feels.
I'VE HAD ENOUGH! I'M GETTING A DIVORCE!
I'm home...
What's the matter, Miwa? You haven't turned the lights on.

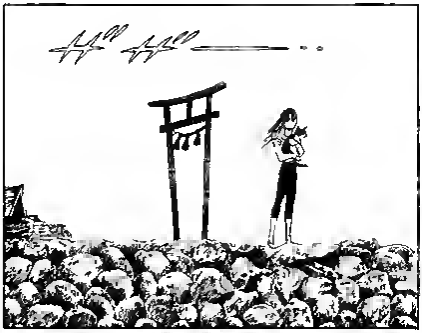

Phew, I'm tired...
It's nothing. Welcome home...

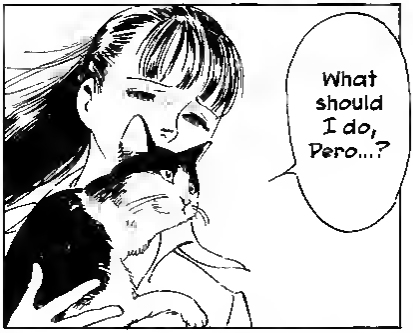
Meowwwwwww!
Oh, right! I bought some dinner! The fish on this island are really tasty!


But we're basically outsiders here, so it's gonna be hard to make friends...
The mayor remembered me. He's going to get me a place to work.

I can't tell you, but I have no place left to go...!

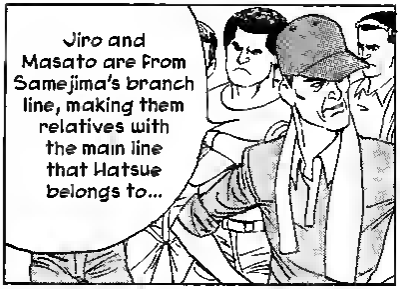
I'm sorry, Father...
I'll put the rice on.
There, there. I'll let you have some, too.



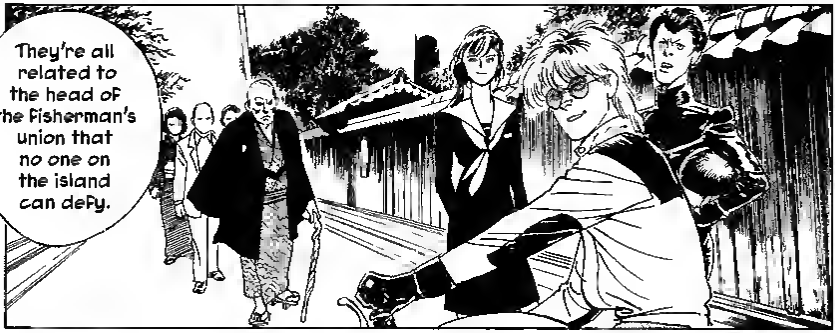

What should I do, Pero...?

It was just the other day they snuck into the processing plant and stole fish!
They got a lot of nerve, lighting a fire and grilling chicken here!

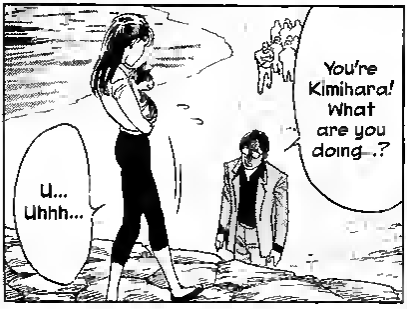
I can't even let my daughters go out at night!
They ruined my field with their motorbikes...

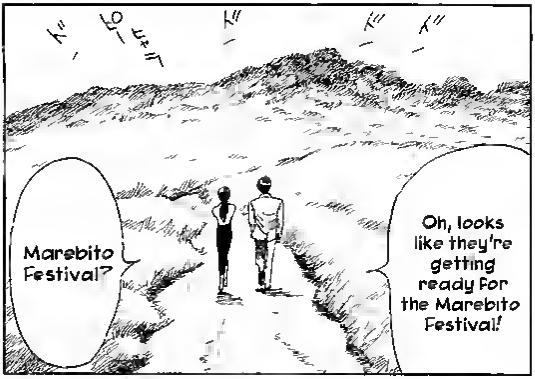

Jiro and Masato are from Samejima's branch line, making them relatives with the main line that Natsue belongs to...

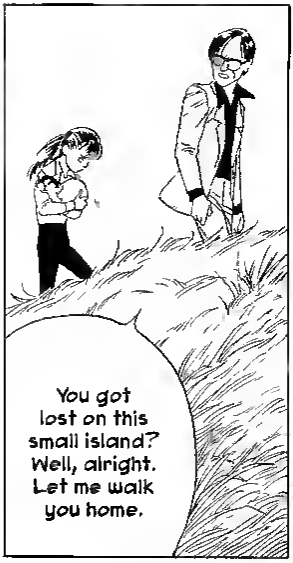
Can't we do something about that duo, sheriff?
Hmm... mmm...


They're all related to the head of the fisherman's union that no one on the island can defy.

You've got a point, Mr Furusawa...
The Samejima clan have held power as head of the fisherman's union since before the war! They can't lord it over us forever!
Hey!


You're Kimihara! What are you doing...?
U... Uhhh...


Marebito Festival?
Oh, looks like they're getting ready for the Marebito Festival!

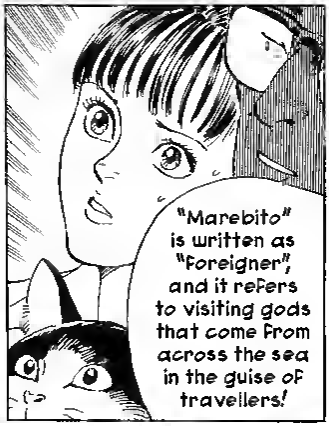

You got lost on this small island? Well, alright. Let me walk you home.

Tomorrow's the preparatory ritual, and the day after is the festival. . Do you see that shrine there?

That's the Mask of the Marebito.

Ah... Pero?

Visiting gods... From across the sea...?
Hisssssssssss!

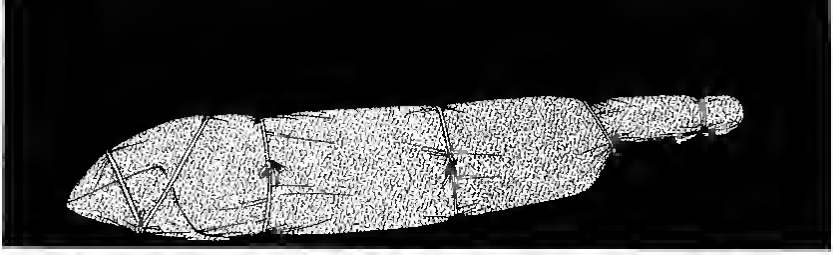

"Marebito" is written as "foreigner", and it refers to visiting gods that come from across the sea in the guise of travellers!

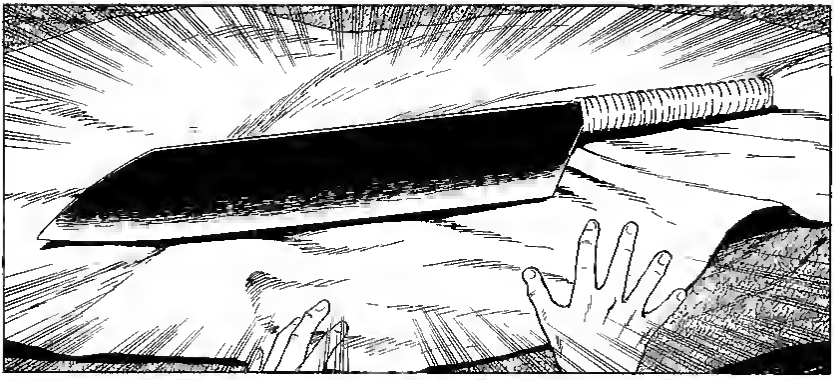
The most famous, such as the Namahage of Tohoku and the Toshidon of Kyushu, wield a giant knife and warn children to obey the rules...
You see, I dabble in folkloristics... And the belief in visiting gods remains in various parts of Japan.

This would happen in any village. It's how the peace of the village was maintained.
Because no one in the village could resist a visiting god. Hehehe...
They say that originally, they took on the role of scolding or punishing the hooligans of the village...
PERO!
.....

PERO!
WHERE'D YOU GO!?
Meow!
Meow!
Whoooo!
F...For real, Hatsue!?

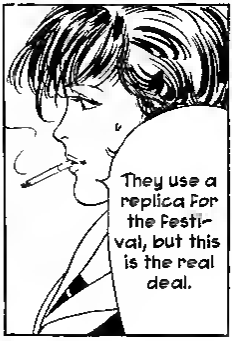
Alright, what're you gonna do with it, Hatsue?
What the fuck? It's not like one cat's worth giving a shit over.
We'll take it to the Marebito Shrine...
C... CUT THE BULL-SHIT!
The inner-most board comes loose. I discovered it when I was a kid playing in here.

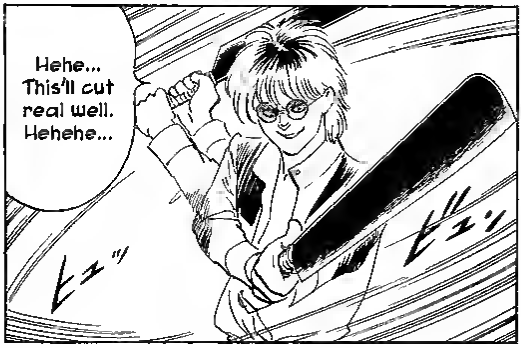




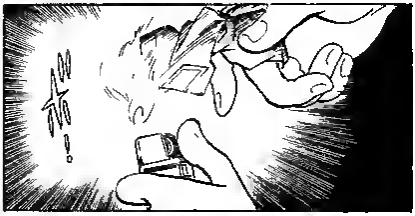
Meeeowwww!

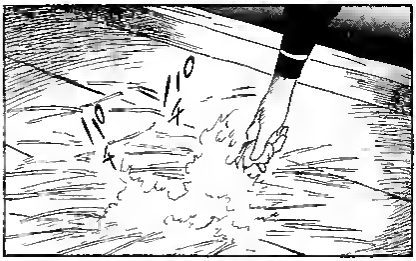
It's not rusted at all. It's been maintained... What's it doing here..?

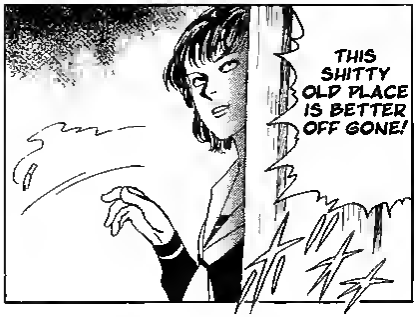

They use a replica for the festival, but this is the real deal.

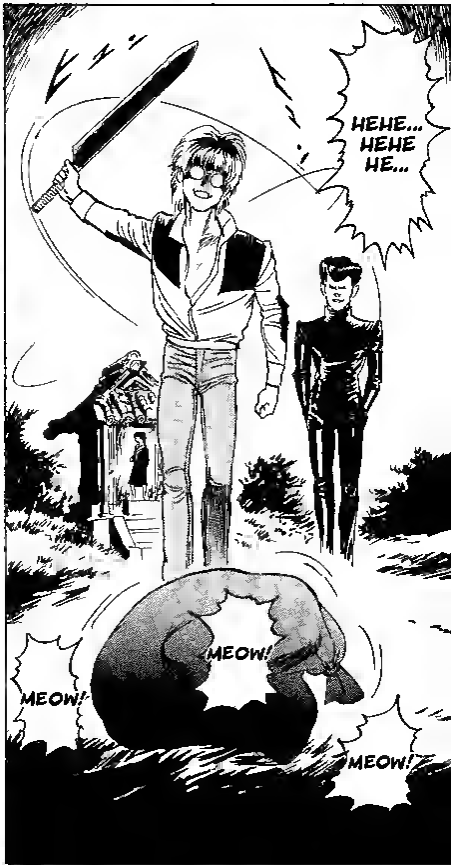

Hehe... This'll cut real well. Hehehe...
ヒュ"
ビュン

.....


ATTA!



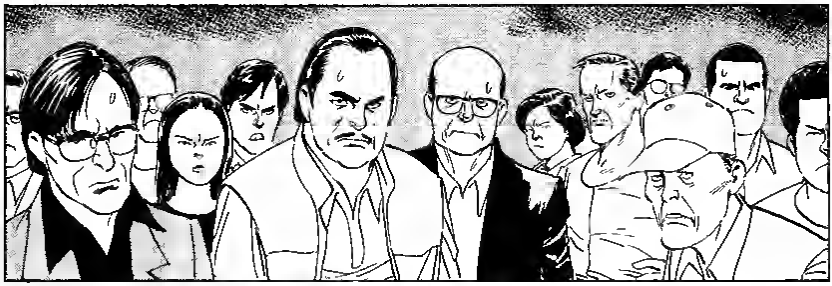

THIS SHITTY OLD PLACE IS BETTER OFF GONE!

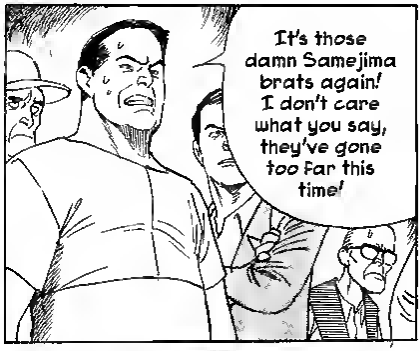

HEHE... HEHE HE...
MEOW!
MEOW!
MEOW!

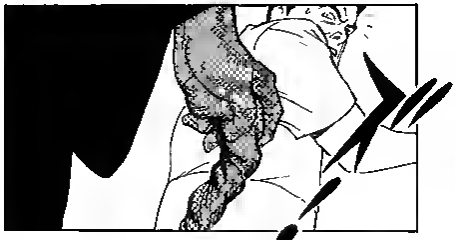
GYAAAAA
HHHHHHHH!

IT'S COMING FROM THE SHRINE!
FIRE!
ガバッ
I'm going to help! I have to help out in times like this, or the village might not accept me... You stay in the house!
FATHER ...!
……

AIIIEEEEEEE
EEEEEEEEEE!
AHAHAHAHAHA!




It's those damn Samejima brats again! I don't care what you say, they've gone too far this time!

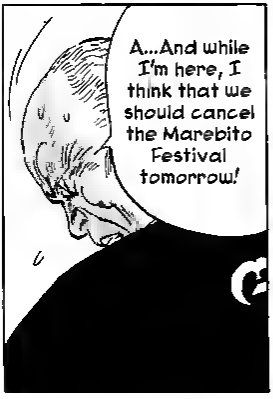


What do you say...
It's a shame that we lost the shrine.

This mask was the only thing that survived...
.....

Mr Samejima...
Well, this is a real shame, Mr Mayor...

Well...
that as head of the Fisherman's union, I contribute a new shrine?


A...And while I'm here, I think that we should cancel the Marebito Festival tomorrow!

ﾆﾔﾘ
That would be good... no?

Cancel the Marebito Festival? You've gotta be kidding! We could never cancel it!
H...Hey, I found this in the grass... It's got blood on it...
That's right! We'll have a night Festival this year!
If it's come to this, the Marebito will have to work at night!
.....
Mr. Kimihara...
There's something we'd like you to do in secret...
What ...?

SIGN GREAT GOD MAREBITO

SIGN: WARD AGAINST EVIL SPIRITS
Are you being a bad boy?
Oooooooh! You'd better do your home-work!
Did you see the cat?

Are you keeping your promises?
Come to the cape at ten o'clock tonight. Hatsue wants to talk to you.

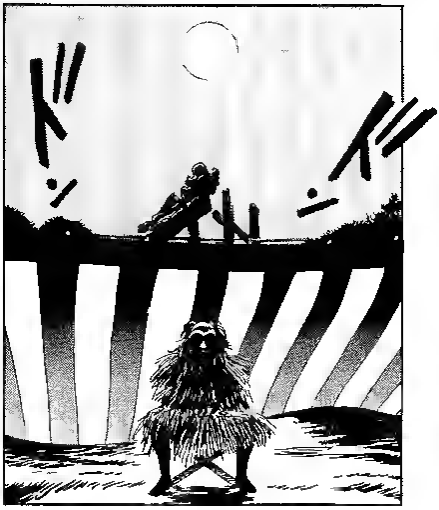
Thanks to you, our children will grow up to be well-behaved, O Great Marebito!
Are you sure about this, Mr. Mayor? I only just got back to the island...
Way to go, Mr. Kimihara!
The Festival ends in the evening, but I'd like you to stay in the outfit for a while...
No, it's people like you who haven't been here in a long time that are perfect for being the Marebito!

WHY NOT, GRANDFATHER? CAN'T I HANG OUT WITH MY COUSINS ON THE DAY OF THE FESTIVAL!?
THE SUN WILL SOON SET! YOU MUST STAY IN THE HOUSE ALL NIGHT!

DO NOT GO OUTSIDE, HATSUE! YOU MUSTN'T SEE JIRO AND MASATO!

IF THE MASK OF THE MOREBITO IS WORN AT NIGHT...

LALA LALA LALA LAAAA AAAH!



W...AAU GH!?
EEK!
W...WHAT THE FUCK? WHO PUT THIS HOLE HERE!?

Have you been bad?
HUH ....!?

GGAGAGAH...
EEEE EK!
A... WAH...

GWAA HHHOO OUUUG GHHH...
HGG HHH...
OBAA UGH!

Kch...
H,..
elp...

He's run out of strength! Take him to the shrine ruins...
Take off the mask! And quick! If he's possessed by the Marebito any longer, his life could be in danger...
.....?

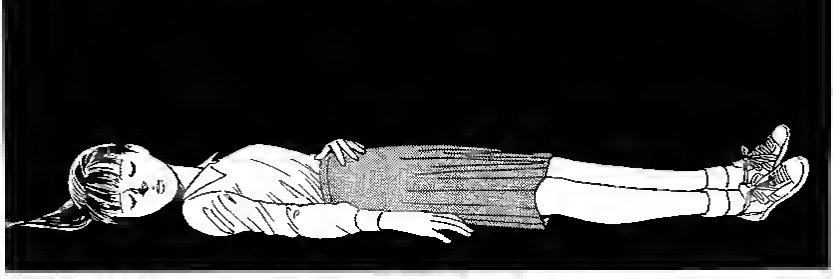
FATHER ...!?
Take him to my house.. He'll come to his senses if he gets some rest.
Then we'll have to clean up...

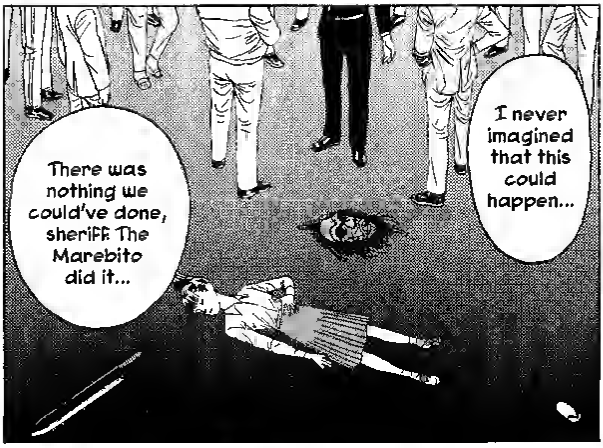
WHY AREN'T YOU SAYING ANYTHING? WHY DON'T YOU CRY AND KISS MY FEET!?

Tch. And I thought they were fucking you up real good.
Jiro and Masato aren't here yet, huh?

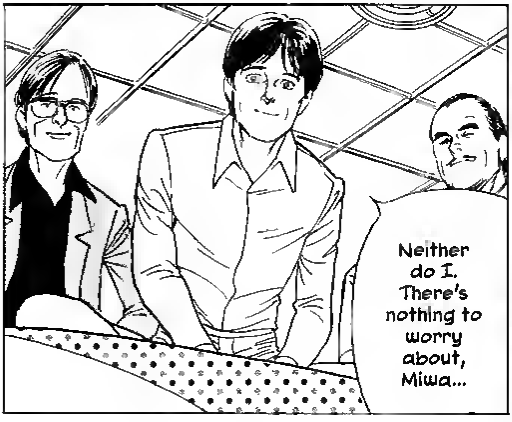
NOOO
OOOO
OOOO
OOOO
OOOO
O!
!

AHHHHH
HHHHHH
HHHHH!
AIIIIIIIEEE
EEEEEEE
EEEEEEE!

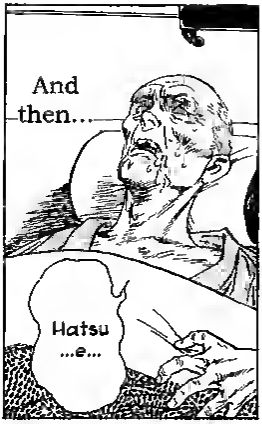


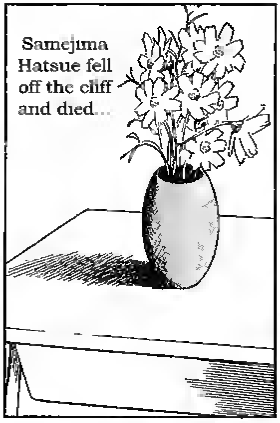

There was nothing we could've done, sheriff. The Marebito did it...
I never imagined that this could happen...

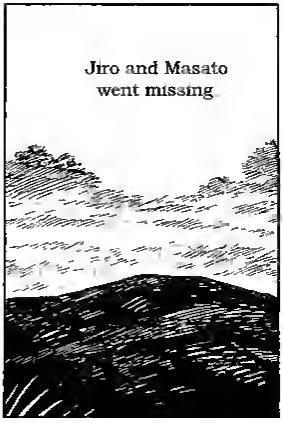
All that's left...

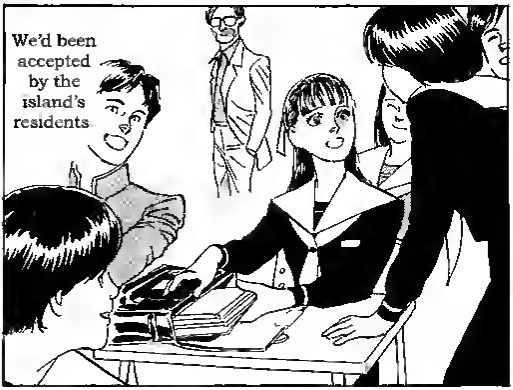

Neither do I. There's nothing to worry about, Miwa...

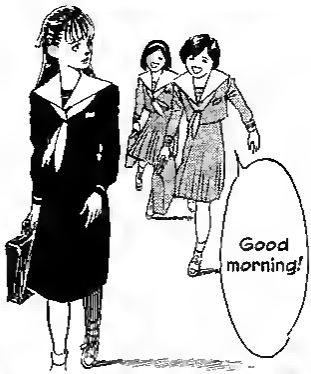
I don't remember anything...


And then...
Hatsu ...e...

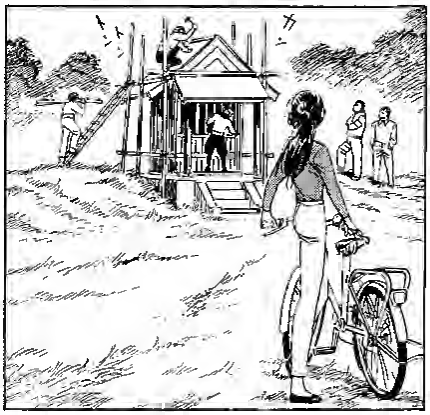

Samejima Hatsue fell off the cliff and died...


Jiro and Masato went missing...

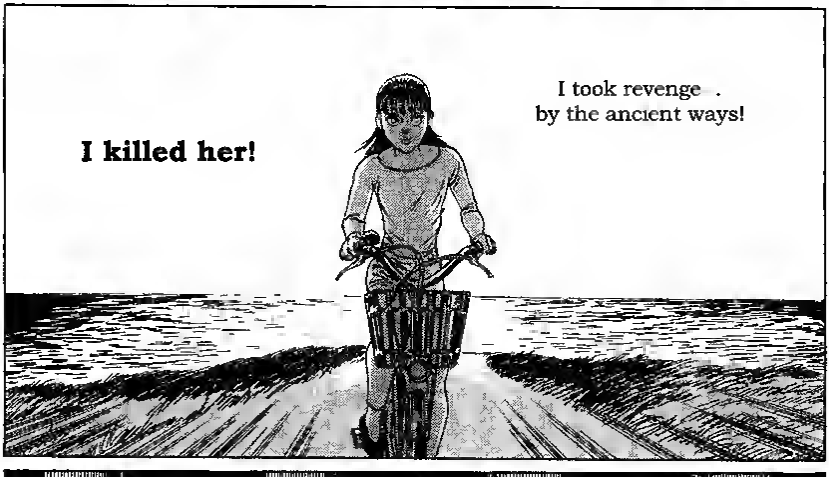

We'd been accepted by the island's residents...


Good morning!

When I touched the mask, I heard the Marebito's voice...
I lied when I said I didn't remember anything...



You hate them, all!
Follow your hatred!
Follow your hatred!


I killed her!
I took revenge . by the ancient ways!

❖おことわり❖

この作品はフィクションです。
実在の人物・団体・事件などには一切関係ありません。
また、雑誌掲載時の時代を背景に描かれていますので、
現在の国名、単位表記と異なる表現がありますが、
あえてそのままとしました。ご了承ください。

❖初出単行本❖

二〇〇二年三月二十五日　小社より刊行

スペシャル対談

星野之宣

ほしの・ゆきのぶ　広市出身。'75年
「鋼鉄のクィー　年「はるかなる朝」(少
年ジャンプ)で　少年誌に「フルーシテ
ィー」「巨人たち　その後も次々と時間
軸と空間を超越　、宇宙規模のSF大作
を発表し続ける　一人者。さらに伝説や
民間伝承に題材　像教授伝奇考」(潮出版
社)などの伝奇　でも大好評を博している。

宇宙SFから伝奇的作品まで、壮大なスケールと綿密な構築力でファンの心を魅了し続ける星野之宣と諸星大二郎。二人はかつて、ほぼ同時期に手塚賞を受賞し、以来独自の作品世界を構築してきた。そんなお二人に、お互いの存在と作品世界について徹底して語っていただいた。

諸星大二郎

もろほし・だいじろう／1949年埼玉県狭山市生まれ、東京で育つ。'70年「ジョンコ・恐竜」でデビュー。'74年「生物都市」（少年ジャンプ）で手塚賞を受賞。少年誌に「暗黒神話」「孔子暗黒伝」等を発表した後、主に青年誌に舞台を移してSF、ホラー、古代史、中国、伝奇ものなど様々なテーマを描き、緻密な考察と特異な絵柄で独自の作品世界を構築する。2000年「西遊妖猿伝」（潮出版社）で第4回手塚治虫文化賞を受賞。

YUKINOBU HOSHINO × DAIJIRO MOROHOSHI

司会／北條成人（フリーライター）　写真／野辺竜馬

――私が初めて星野先生の作品に出会ったのは、「週刊少年ジャンプ」（75年34号）に掲載された手塚賞受賞作「はるかなる朝」でした。諸星先生の作品にも同時期に出会い、以来ずっとお二人のファンとして作品を読み続けています。本日はよろしくお願いします。

伝奇ロマンの世界を描いて互いに異なる作風を確立されたお二人ですが、デビュー以来よきライバルとして、また友人として、何かと意識し、また触発もされてきたことと思います。

その辺のところも含めて、腹う存分語り合っていただければと思います。

［以下、文中の（　）内は編集部による註］

良きにつけ悪しきにつけ参考にさせていただきました。諸星さんタイプは他にいないですから（星野）

――初めに、お二人がデビューされて、出会うまでをお聞きしたいと思います。まず諸星先生が74年に「生物都市」で手塚賞を受賞され、その翌年の75年に星野先生が「はるかなる朝」で同賞を受賞されました。出会いはそのころですか。

諸星　いや、だいぶ後だったと思いますね。

――手塚治虫先生との鼎談（85年）によりますと、鼎談の前日に星野先生が諸星先生の家を訪ねられて、自分の部屋にある本と同じものが置いてある、と驚かれたそうですが。

諸星　その前にどこかの喫茶店で会っているよね。

星野　そうか。伊東かどこかの温泉で会ったかな。

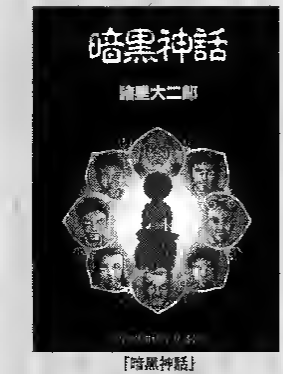
諸星　あれはもっと後ですね。いつだったかもう？……

――すいぶん時がたっていますからね。

諸星　二人ともあまりパーティーとかに行かないから。

――お互いの作品は関心を持って読まれていたのですか。

星野　僕はもう完全に意識していましたね。1年前に諸星さんが手塚賞をとっていましたから、もちろん目標にしていました。「少年ジャンプ」での描き方を始め『妖怪ハンター』の短期連載とか『暗黒神話』など、長さや規模なども参考にしました（86年『スペース・イラスト集 STAR FIELD』収録のインタビューに、『暗黒神話』のやり方（短期集中連載）にならって描いたのが『巨人たちの伝説』だった、とある）。



『暗黒神話』
（創美社発行、発売元、集英社）より

――『妖怪ハンター』は、諸星先生の初の週刊誌連載でしたね。

諸星　最初の連載は見事にこけました。星野さんはそれを見て、同じ轍を踏まないようにしたのではないでしょうか。

星野　完全に同じ轍を踏んでますよ。しかも忠実に（笑）。

諸星　とくに後半は失敗しました。星野さんの最初の連載は『ブルーシティー』でしたね。

星野　僕もやはり後半で失敗しました。

諸星　僕が先に参考に悪い例を見せているのではないですか。

星野　良きにつけ悪しきにつけ、参考にさせていただきました。諸星さんタイプは他にいませんからね。参考にするには諸星さんしかいなかった。自分と同じタイプは他に見あたらなかったですね。

諸星　あのころは、少年週刊誌というと野球マンガなんかが全盛でね。

星野　そもそもSFマンガを描く人が少なかったですからね。

――先の鼎談で手塚先生は、当時の手塚賞応募作品は80％がSFだったので、SF的な感じの作品は最初に落とそうとしたと語ら

れていますね。

諸星　それを知っていたらSFは描かなかった（笑）。野球マンガとか描いていたかも。

星野　そうしたら、とんでもない魔球を考え出したかもしれない。

――星野先生は、野球マンガのアシスタントをされていたことがありますね。

星野　ええ。『炎の巨人』（原作：三枝四郎／作画：竜崎遼児）というマンガです。

――諸星先生は、アシスタントをされたことはないと思いますが。

星野　諸星さんの絵で、アシスタントはちょっと無理だったのでは……（笑）。そこだけ異質な世界が展開しそうだもの。

諸星　僕の絵は手伝ってもらいにくいしね。仕上げだけ手伝ってもらうくらいで。

――星野先生は、アシスタントさんがもう少し手伝っておられると思いますが。

星野　僕の方が柔軟性がある（笑）。

――手塚治虫先生はお二人にとって、どのような存在だったのでしょうか。

諸星　僕は手塚治虫文化賞をもらった時（『西遊妖猿伝』2000年）もどこかに書いたと思うんですが、手塚さんは子どもの時の原体験です。僕はマンガ雑誌を買った経験がなくて、光文社の単行本が1冊100円とか200円で売っていたので、それをお小遣いで買ってました。最初の出会いは『鉄腕アトム』だったと思います。

――作品に投影されていますか。

諸星　手塚さんはスケールの大きな話が多いですからね。それを30ページくらいで描いてしまったりするでしょう。30ページであれだけの内容を描くのだからすごい。手塚さんのように、スケールの大きい話をやりたいという思いはありますね。昔はコマが小さかったでしょう。僕もコマが小さいんです。

――スケールが大きいと言えば『暗黒神話』などがありますが、どこかつながっているものがありますか。

諸星　それほどでは。手塚さんの場合は世界的というか、群衆ドラマというか、なかなかそこまではなれない。

星野　手塚さんはマンガ家そのものの典型というか、あのころのマンガ家の代表格みたいな人ですよね。SFも描くし、少女マンガ、歴史ものなど、スポ根以外は何でもやっていました。また僕らも、そのようにオールマイティで何でも描ける、それがマンガ家だと思っていました。僕が子どもだったころは、そのような「ものすごいおじさん」がいた気がする。職人でもなんでもそうですけど、逆立ちしても絶対かなわない、そういう「すごいおじさん」が周りにいたんですね。そのマンガ家の代表が手塚治虫です。マンガ家になりたいということは手塚治虫になりたいということでしたね。自分もSFを基本にして、できるだけいろいろなジャンルに挑戦したいという意欲があるのは、手塚さんの影響だと思いますよ。プロになってからは、『ブラックジャック』が参考になりました。いかに20枚くらいのなかに納めるか、とか。あのころ諸星さんのマンガもコマを考えながら読んでました。諸星さんは（1ページ当たり）9コマで描いているから（自分は）8コマにしようとか。手塚さんのすごさはプロになってから実感しました。ですから、子どもの時も、大きくなってからも影響を受けています。

神話はつっこむと面白い。当時の人の大勢の集団の原型みたいなものがあるし（諸星）

――お二人が伝奇ものや歴史ものを描かれるようになった経緯についてお聞かせください。

星野　僕の場合、伝奇的なものとしては、『ヤマタイカ』の前に『ヤマトの火』を『ヤングジャンプ』に描いたのですが、当時、諸星さんの描いた『暗黒神話』以外に頼るよすがはありませんでした。同じジャンルのマンガは、他にはなかったですからね。古代史や神話の素養はなかったのですが、『ヤマトの火』を描くために、いろいろ勉強している過程で、『暗黒神話』を再発見して、憧れ込んでしまったんです。その時に、諸星さんに会いたいなと思いました。それまでは、僕はSFで、諸星さんは伝奇ものですから、本質的に異質だと

思っていたんです。まあ僕のSFは暗くて、未来的な明るさは感じられませんでしたが（笑）。ただ、諸星さんには会いたいけど、会ってどういう話をするかは見えませんでしたから、とくに働きかけもしませんでした。「ヤングジャンプ」で連載を始めることが決まってから、会っていろんな話を聞きたいなと思ったんです。

――諸星先生は74年の『妖怪ハンター』が伝奇ものの最初の作品ですね。

諸星　ちょうど怪奇小説に凝っていた頃なんです。ラヴクラフトとかアーサー・マッケンなど。外国にはゴーストハンターものというジャンルがあるんですね。心霊現象の探偵がいると聞いて、それをやってみようと。

星野　マンガの原題は何だったんですか。

諸星　自分では『妖怪狩り』のつもりだったんですが、編集者に『妖怪ハンター』がいいといわれて。ゴーストハンターものがスタートだったわけです。そこで古墳が面白そうだと思って、その辺で初めて資料を当たった。

星野　それまで古代史とか、日本の神話とかそれほど勉強しなかったのですか。

諸星　しませんでした。怪奇ものを描きたくて、ネタを探して古事記を読んでみたら、とても面白くて。でも5回描いたらネタが無くなってしまった。これはやばいなと。

――なぜ『古事記』や『日本書紀』に惹かれていくのでしょうか。

"火の民族仮説"がテーマの「ヤマタイカ」（潮漫画文庫）より

諸星　どうしてでしょうかね。何か理由をつけたいと思ったのか……。神話はつつこむと面白い。現代でも生きているところがあるし、当時の人の大勢の集団の生活の原型みたいなものがあるし。稗田（稗田礼二郎）も初めは古墳の話を描いたせいで考古学者だったんだけど、いつのまにか民俗学になって、今や、何でも屋になってきました。

――最近は『古事記』や『日本書紀』から少し離れていますね。

諸星　だんだん稗田ばかりが出てきて、パターンが同じようになってきたので、変えてみたいと思って、稗田を出さないで作品ができないかと考えたんです。

星野　日本も世界も含めて神話は、どんなファクターで見ても話が通っていくところがある。『暗号神話』で言えば、「馬」というキーワードで日本神話を解いちゃう。僕は『ヤマトの火』や『ヤマタイカ』では、「火」や「火山」ですべてを読んでみたけれども、他のキーワードでも神話を解いていけるんじゃないかと思うんです。神話には、そういう多層構造をもっているところがあります。「鳥」でもかまわないでしょう。その都度いろいろな要素をとりだして、解釈することが可能なんじゃないか。そういう意味では、神話は本当に豊かな世界だと思います。

――ネタの宝庫ということでしょうか。

星野　俗っぽい言い方をするとそうなってし

まいます。しかし、そこにそれを見つけるのは普通の人には無理なのではないでしょうか。神話からキーワードを見つけ出してくる、キーワードにそって神話を解釈していくというのは、誰にでも出来ることではないと思います。ネタの宝庫というとザクザク出てくるように聞こえますが。

――見つけ出すには、それなりのアンテナが必要と言うことでしょうか。

星野　ある日、ぼっとひらめくものではなく、地道に呻吟しているうちに徐々に見えてくるものだと思います。

諸星　そうですか。僕はひらめかないかなーって待っているだけなんです。やっぱり呻吟しないとだめでしょうかね。

星野　呻吟しても、ぼーっとしてても結果は同じかもしれませんがね（笑）。

外に分かってもらうには説得力が必要。それにはまず自分を説得する必要がある（星野）

――作者と作品の距離感についてお伺いしたいのですが。諸星先生にとって『暗黒神話』は、どのくらい近いものなのでしょうか。あくまで嘘の世界で、距離をおいているのでしょうか。

諸星　僕は、マンガは全部嘘だと思っています。マンガ家は嘘を描くのが商売ですから。ただ全体のプロットとか仕掛けみたいなものが出来て、その後、いろいろ本を調べると、ちょうどタイミングよく資料が出てくる。たとえば、『暗黒神話』では馬頭観音を描いたんですが、両脇が寂しいなと思って、脇士をつけた。その時は日光、月光しか思いつかなかったので、それを描いたんです。ところが、あとで考えると日光、月光はびったりだった。そういう偶然はありますね。

馬頭観音と脇士　暗黒神話」（創美社発行、発売元・集英社）より

星野　それはあり得ますね。何か憑いたんでしょうか。

――どこかで読んでいた知識とかが出てきたんでしょうかね。では、星野先生にとって「ヤマトの火」などはどうだったんでしょうか。

星野　僕が伝奇的なマンガを描こうと決めた時は、『暗黒神話』を参考にするしかない状況でした。でも『暗黒神話』と自分の描く「ヤマトの火」が決定的に違うところは、諸星さんの作品は、完全に閉ざされた世界の中で完結しているんですね。その中では見事にパズルが組み合わさって出来上がっている。しかし外に向かって開いていくものではないと思ったんです。僕が描こうとしたのは、むしろ外に向かって開いていくもので、だから、人に対して説明して分かってもらいたい。そこが基本的に違っていたと思います。外に分かってもらうには、説得力が必要です。それにはまず自分を説得する必要があります。『暗黒神話』は、連載当時はその世界に入り込ん

でいけなかった。知識がないと入っていけないだろうな、という気持ちもありました。中にいったん入り込んでしまえば、永遠に遊んでいられそうな世界なんですが、入り込めない人間にとっては、はじき出されてしまうところがありますね。

諸星　うーん。それで売れないんだな。

星野　そんなことはないでしょう。熱烈なファンがいるんだから。僕は体質的に説明しないと気が済まないタイプですね。『暗黒神話』を読んでいると、これには説明が必要だろうなと思う時に、それがないまま進んでいってしまう。置いていかれちゃう気がすることがありますね。

諸星　僕はあまり説明をしないので。

――『ヤマトの火』と『ヤマタイカ』、諸星先生は読まれていますか。

諸星　はい。読みました。内容はだいぶ重なりますね。

星野　ええ、徹頭徹尾説明して描いていますから、きっと読んでいていやになってしまったのでは（笑）。

――『暗黒神話』がベースになって生まれたことを諸星先生はご存じでしたか。

諸星　いえ、知りませんでした。どうして、これからあれが続くのかは不思議ですね。まあ、きっかけだけで、始めれば自分のものになってしまうものだと思いますから。あとは全然違うものになるのは当たり前です。

――諸星先生にとっては、外国の恐怖小説や日本の伝奇ものが先達になるのでしょうか。

諸星　僕は、SFとかはあまり読まなかったから。

星野　諸星さんが『暗黒神話』を描き始めた時は、特に参考にするようなものはなかったと思うんです。学説とかが少年マンガに入ってきた初めてのケースではないでしょうか。諸星さんとお話したいなと思っていた時期というのは、ちょうど僕らの後の、活字よりは映像派という世代が台頭した時期でもあったわけです。諸星さんは活字派の最後の牙城みたいなもので、自分はそれにつらなる世代という意識があった。それで話が合うんじゃないかと思ったわけです。お互いに本や活字から影響を受けてマンガを描くという意味では、似ているといえば似ているんですね。

諸星　今はビジュアルから入っている人が多いのでしょうね。僕たちは、お互いにマンガを読んで育っているから。

星野　参考文献なんかふつう書かないですよ（笑）。

稗田礼二郎
『海竜祭の夜』（創美社発行、発売元・集英社）より

稗田礼二郎は、自分でもどういう生活をしているのかわからない。（諸星）

――そろそろ『宗像教授伝奇考』の話題に移ってゆきたいと思います。宗像教授と稗田礼二郎は、お互いに出会う可能性はあるのでしょうか（笑）。お互いに本を持っていることは、分かっているのですが（笑）。

諸星　稗田礼二郎は生活臭のないキャラクターですからね。自分でもどういう生活をしているのかわからない。年齢も不詳ですし。

――初登場は74年です。もしかしたら若返っているのではないでしょうか。私生活は謎でしょうか。

諸星　うーん。わりと普通の生活をしているんじゃないかな。

――フィールドワークをしている時は、奥さんや子どもはどうしているのかな、と気になりますが。

諸星　独身なんじゃないかな。

――宗像教授は二十数年前に奥さんと子

どもを亡くした男やもめ、という設定ですね。星野先生から見て、稗田礼二郎にはどのような印象を持たれていますか。

星野　稗田礼二郎はあれだけ旅行していて、いったいどんな論文を書いているのかなと気になりますね。どういう結論を引き出しているのか（笑）。

諸星　結論は言っているんです。誰にもわからないという（笑）。

星野　あんとく様（「海竜祭の夜」）はどのように論文を書いたのかな。

――『宗像教授伝奇考』の「彗星王」は『暗黒神話』へのオマージュだと思われますが、両作品はスサノオのとらえかたがまったく異なりますね。星野先生、「彗星王」はどこからスタートしたのでしょうか。

星野　全然オマージュのつもりなく始めました。彗星を扱いたいと考えていたんです。その時に『暗黒神話』に全く無関係に描いてしまうのはかえってまずい気がして、それなら徹底的によりそって同じ設定にして、オマージュにしたほうが形になるのではないか、と考えたわけです。最初から同じにしようと思っていたのではありません。〝宗像シリーズ〟は最初に迷いがありました。オカルトでいくか理論でいくか、はっきり決められなかった。『妖怪ハンター』はオカルトでしたが、宗像は最初の作品（「巨人（ダイダラ）伝説」）で妖怪を出したものの、それ以降は迷いがあった。いったい宗像はどうあるべきか、と。ですから「彗星王」（第7作）は部分的にはオカルトがあるのですが、そのあたりに僕自身の迷いが出てきていますね。

――「彗星王」のような、鳥居の向こうに違う世界があるというのが、『妖怪ハンター』でも見受けられます（例えば「闇の客人」）。そのような考え方は一般的なモチーフなんでしょうか。

諸星　まあ、聖域への入り口の印だろうから。東南アジアへ行くと、村の入り口に門があって、鳥の彫刻がしてあるそうですが。

星野　鳥がいるから鳥居（笑）。

――次に「菊理姫（くくりひめ）は何を告げたか」ですが、菊理姫について「聞く」という解釈で描かれたのが諸星先生（「黄泉からの声」）で、「括る」という解釈をとられたのが星野先生です。それぞれの解釈についてお聞きしたいと思います。

諸星　僕の解釈は、もともと「神の声を聞く」と言っている人がいるので、オリジナルのアイディアではありません。菊理姫もその立場の人ではないですかね。そもそもイザナギが死んだ人間に会いに行く話ですから。死んだ人間というのは巫女を通じないと普通は聞けない。「いたこ」のように霊媒として声を聞く、ということだったんじゃないかな。

星野　初めて専門的な言葉を聞きましたね（笑）。

『宗像教授伝奇考』第一集「巨人（ダイダラ）伝説」より

スサノオ
『宗像教授伝奇考』第三集「彗星王」より

諸星　受け売りです。稗田だとこうはいかないんじゃないかな。

星野　僕は、菊理姫の話はよく知らなかったんです。加門七海さんとの対談（『文藝』97年秋号）で、諸星さんと僕に「菊理姫をどう思うか」という同じ質問をされた時、諸星さんは即座に返事をしたんですが、僕は、えっ何の話？　と。菊理姫を考えたことも、今まで気にとめたこともなかったんです。たしか、『日本書紀』の一書の中に出てくる話ですよね。それで諸星さんが答えたのに僕は答えられないで、情けなかったものですから何とかしようと。そこで「菊理姫は何を告げたか」というテーマで作品を描いたわけです。まあ、宿題みたいなものです。（作中で宗像は、女子学生から同じ質問をされて、早く答えを出さないと面目丸つぶれ、と語る）黄泉比良坂あたりの話ですから、現世とあの世との境目ですよ。そこに菊理姫はいるわけですから、人間だとすれば一番死者に近い人間ですよね。

何でこんなことを思いつくんだろう、ということをずっと思い続けることが私の仕事なので（星野）

――次は「西遊将門伝」です。この作品が収録された単行本第五集のカバーを見て思わずにやりとしたファンも多かったと思います。ちょうど諸星先生の『西遊妖猿伝』の潮出版社版が刊行中で店頭に並んでいました。この作品の発想の原点はどこにあったのでしょうか。

「西遊妖猿伝」第7巻と「宗像教授伝奇考」第5集のカバー（ともに潮出版社）

星野　そもそもこのタイトルにしようと思ったのはだいぶ後の段階で、前の段階では将門の伝説と西遊記が何とか結びつかないか、と考えたわけです。何でこんなこと思いつくんだろう、ということをずっと思い続けることが私の仕事なので（笑）。それで、そこに材料があれば話になっていくし、材料がなければ単なる思いつきで、ばかばかしい話で終わってしまう。材料を少しずつ積み重ねて、なんとかなるかなというところでタイトルを考えた時、このようなタイトルになったわけです。

――ここまでのラブコールを諸星先生はどう思ったか、ぜひお聞きしたいです。

星野　こんなに愛していると思わなかった、とか（笑）。

諸星　どうせなら印税半分くれるとありがたいのですが（笑）。

――ここでは北斗七星をモチーフにしているのですが、『暗黒神話』で諸星先生が日本地図に星座を当てはめたことは意識されていなかったのでしょうか。

星野　それは意識しませんでしたね。北斗七星と将門の関係は、ある程度定番になっていましたので。

――諸星先生も「黄泉からの声」で将門塚を取り上げておられますね。

諸星　ええ。科学的な解説はしませんけど（笑）。僕の場合はかなり怖い将門になりました。

――「西遊将門伝」は、執筆前に作品で取り上げる場所を回られていますね。現地取材についてのお考えをお聞かせください。

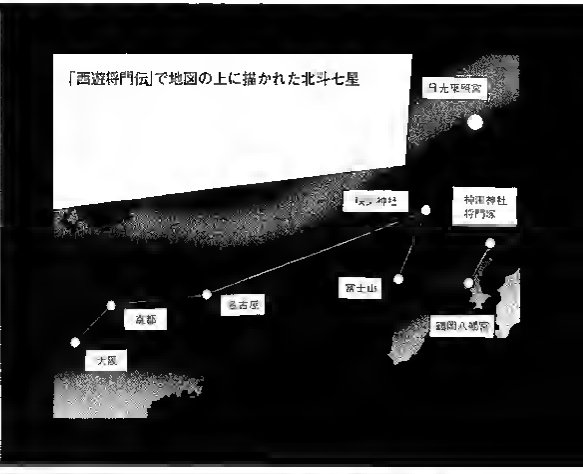
星野　あの時は、たまたま時間に余裕がある時期だったので、準備に時間をかけることができたんです。普通の締め切りがある状態では時間がとれない。題材が決まって、話が固まってくると、もう描くだけで間に合わないですから。

諸星　僕も、昔も今も現地を見ていないですね。見ちゃうとこんなものかとがっかりすることが多い。想像で描いた後で実際に見て、こんなもんだったのとか。昔、尖石という巨石があると聞いて（尖石遺跡）、実際に見たら気が抜けるほど小さかったんです。

星野　僕は、九分九厘までは机上で決めたほうがいいと思う。そこまで決めないと取材しても意味がないですからね。現地に行って何か見つけるとは考えられない。後の一厘で、現地取材をできればしたほうがいいでしょうが。ただ、どうしても見ておきたい場合はあります。

諸星　取材するんだったら、温泉地ばかりを訪ねて、「西遊温泉伝」など描きたいですね（笑）。

――お互いに作品で扱う題材が重なっていることに対して、どのように感じておられますか。



星野　基本的に同じものを扱っていても、全然違う作品が出来てくるという変な信頼感はあります。

諸星　僕は、他の人が同じ題材だと気にしちゃう。でも、ここまで違うと、もう。

星野　ほとんどお互いに見なくていい。相手が何を描いていようと自分には関係がないというか、見なくても似たようなものになる恐れはない、と思いますよ。諸星さんは、きっと、世界中でこの話を考えるのは自分だけだと思っているんですよ。他に似たような話を考える人がいるなんて、まず考えない。

――では、お二人にとって、お互いはどういう存在なんでしょうか。

星野　やっぱり先達としかいいようがないですね。いろいろな意味でずっと助けてもらったと思います。古代史や日本神話を初めて描く時に、すがるものは他になかったのですから、自分一人では出来なかったでしょうね。諸星さんは誰も先達がいないのに、『暗黒神話』を生み出したのですから、すごいと思います。僕は5歳年下なので、まあ、5年あればなんとか追いつけるかもしれないと。

諸星　星野さんは僕のハードSFの先達ということにしたいのですが、僕はハードSFはあきらめちゃったんで。これからは代わりにネタを提供してください。

星野　諸星さんが小説を書いて、僕がマンガを描くというのはいいかもしれませんね。

諸星　原作料が入っていいかもしれない。

――星野先生、諸星先生の絵についてはどう思われますか。

星野　真似のできない絵ですね。諸星さんの絵とストーリーは不可分ですね。あの絵があって、あのストーリーがある。僕はまず自分でストーリーの原作を書いて、それをマンガ化するという意識でやっているんですね。ですから何でこんな原作を書くんだ、と思いながら描いているんですがね（笑）。こんな原作じゃ、難しいじゃないか、と（笑）。諸星さんは、最初から絵とストーリーが混合した状態で構成している気がしますね。

――諸星先生は、ストーリー、絵の順番なのでしょうか。

諸星　いえ、絵が先の場合もありますね。まあイメージですね。

星野　稗田シリーズを描く時は、まず妖怪の絵を描くんですかね（笑）。

諸星　稗田は、少年マンガの主人公には見えないかもしれない。

――創作のプロセスについてお聞かせください。

星野　本を読んでメモをとります。役にたつかどうか分かりませんが。自分にとって大事なメモだけを残しています。諸星さんは、地図を作ってみて、ものを載せるそうですね。

諸星　地図は必要な時は描くけど、地図で全部が出来るわけじゃないから。

星野　地図が好きですか。

諸星　なんか好きですね。現地に行かなくて済むし、楽ですから。遊びみたいなもので、興がのってくると描くイメージですかね。地図を描かないと距離感が狂うことがありますからね。何十キロもいっぺんで歩いちゃったり。実際にはありえませんが。

――宗像も半日で京都の山の中をものすごい距離を歩いたことがありました（「酒呑童子異聞」）。逢魔が時という説明がついていましたが。

諸星　稗田だと疲れました、という説明になる。

星野　稗田はあまり健康そうではありませんね。

――でもスマートで、20年以上も若いままですね。もしかしたら卵形のタイムカプセル（『暗黒神話』に登場）を使っているのかもしれませんね。

諸星　まあ基本が嘘ですから。その点、宗像教授はリアルですから。

――宗像教授はリアルに歳をとっているように見えます。

諸星　じゃあ、描いていったら歳とって死んじゃうじゃないですか。

時代とともに歳をとっている？　宗像教授
file.35「流星刻・後編」の宗像（左）とfile.4「宗像の海」の宗像（右）

「2001夜物語」を特撮したら映像的におもしろいんじゃないかな（諸星）

――最近は、どんなことに興味をお持ちですか。

星野　量子力学に興味があったのですが、最近は目の前の仕事で頭がいっぱいです。たとえば、淡路島と琵琶湖の形はなぜ似ているかとか。

諸星　僕は〝菜と紙魚子（しおりとしみこ）〟を復活させろと言われています。アイディア

が出れば楽しいんですが、出ないと。

――〝栞と紙魚子〟の「古本地獄屋敷」に、『暗黒神話』に登場する『信濃秘話』という架空の本を書いた室井恭蘭の全集の話が出てきましたね。

星野　よくあんな嘘がつけますね。探した人がいると思いますよ。

――〝栞と紙魚子〟は『ネムキ』という少女マンガ誌に掲載されていることもあってか、ソフトに描かれていると思います。ギャグの要素も入っていますし。

諸星　もともとホラーのはずだったんですが。最初、生首の話を描こうと思ったものですから。

――星野先生は、ソフトなタッチのマンガを描かれる予定はありませんでしょうか。

星野　ソフトはいいけど、生ぬるくなってしまっては意味がないと思いますね。口当たりを良くしろと言われたらなんとかしたいと思いますが、内容をソフトにと言われたら自分にとっての尺度が分かってないと思いますから難しいですね。

――とりあえずレックス先生（『恐竜教室』他）なんかは、気が抜けると思いますが。

星野　あれは、いくら何でも気が抜けすぎです。

――ご自身の作品の映像化に関して、お二人の考えを聞かせていただけますか。

諸星　もし映像化したい人がいれば、任せます。ずっと前に『世にも奇妙な物語』で『復讐クラブ』を映像化したことがあったんですが（89年放映）、原作そのままでしたので、かえっておもしろくなかった。アレンジしたほうがいいと思います。

星野　僕は、アニメは好きではありません。自分の作品がアニメになるのはいやですし、アニメそのものがいやですね。作るほうも見るほうも勘違いしてしまう気がするんですよ。その勘違いの部分を誰が補正するのか。たとえば『サザエさん』はいつまでも若いままですね。いつまでも若くてかわいいことはあり得ないと思う。人間の世界では許されないことがアニメでは許される。それに対して考え違いする人間が出てこないとは限らない。物事は現実との間でたえずフィードバックしなければいけないと考えています。諸星さんがいくら自分の作品は嘘だと言っていても、どこかでちゃんと真実があります。その部分がなくなったら単なる絵空事になってしまいます。その絵空事が今のアニメーションだという気がします。

諸星　水木しげるはどうですかね。

星野　テレビアニメになった『ゲゲゲの鬼太郎』は絵空事ですね。

――お互いの作品で好きなもの、あるいは映像化したらよいと思われる作品はありますでしょうか。

星野　〝ゼビッタ・シリーズ〟（『コンプレックス・シティ』他）は、連続アニメにしたら面白いのでは。

諸星　僕はハードSFのなかで面白いのがあったな。『2001夜物語』を特撮したら映像的に面白いんじゃないかな。

――今後の執筆予定を伺いたいのですが。

諸星　今までの途中の作品は、折があったら続けたいとは思っています。まあ、やれるところから。『西遊妖猿伝』は早く完結させたいですね。

星野　あれはライフワークという意識があるのですか。

諸星　いえ、全然ありません。あれをライフワークにしたら、できたら死んじゃうんじゃないかな。『諸怪志異』の中の、数年前まで「Weekly漫画アクション」でやっていた活劇ものみたいなのは、その場の勢いですから、中途半端はいやなので、どこかでまとめてしまいたいですね。場所さえあれば、完結させたいです。

星野　宗像などのシリーズものの再開。宇宙SFものの連載、などです。

――最後になりましたが、お互いに作品のリクエストをお願いします。

諸星　意味のないものを描いてもらおうかな。

星野　休んでいるシリーズの、どれか一つでも再開してほしいですね。

――今日は本当にありがとうございました。

（2001・12・22）

解説

封印を解き放つ鍵を持つ航海者について

北森　鴻
作家

平成十年だったと記憶する。

その年ぼくは、某出版社で新しいミステリーのシリーズを立ち上げ、すでに二作を仕上げていた。本格推理と民俗学を融合させた、まったく新しいタイプのミステリーで、主人公兼名探偵は、美貌の女性民俗学者。調査活動中に出合った事件を、そこにまつわる民俗学上の謎とともに快刀乱麻を断つが如く解決してゆく。

これってとっても斬新ではないですか。

民俗学とミステリーの融合はすでに京極夏彦氏が諸作で試みていたものの、氏の作品とは少し角度を異にしていたし、編集部の評判もそこそこ良かったこともあって、北森　鴻はとても幸福な野望に満たされていたのであった。三作目の注文を受け、「さて今度は密室でもいっちまいますか」などとほざきながら、資料探しのために新宿の紀伊國屋書店を訪れるまでは。もっと詳細を語るなら、偶然立ち寄った漫画コーナーで、星野之宣『宗像

教授伝奇考』のタイトルを発見するまでは。

背筋を走り抜けるいやな予感にはあえて気づかぬふりをしつつ、そっとレジで精算を済ませたぼくは、すぐさま近くの喫茶店に飛び込んだ。

一読した頃にはすでに思考能力は薄れ、

――コレハイッタイ、ドウシタモノデショウカ……。

などと、ほとんど意味のない言葉が脳細胞のあちこちでうごめいていたことを今でもよく覚えている。

『宗像教授伝奇考』こそは、民俗学をベースにおいた壮大な伝奇ロマンであり、SFであり、そして恐ろしいことにミステリーでもあった。

（註・ここで筆者トラウマの発作を起こしたため、一時中断）

さて、気を取り直して。

近年、民俗学とエンタテイメントとの融合というか、コラボレーションがかなりの広がりを見せているようだ。これはひとえに民俗学という学問が持つ「特異体質」によるところが大きいのではあるまいか。拙作を執筆する上で読んだいくつかの資料の中に、こんな一説があった。

「歴史学は点を、民俗学は面を模索している」

あるいは、

「歴史学は反物に描かれた絢爛たる模様であり、民俗学は反物そのものである」

どうです、納得ができるようで、まったく理解できないでしょう。実はこれこそが民俗学の本質に関わる部分ではないかと、ぼくは考えたりする。

系統があるようで全くない学問。たとえば古民具を専門に研究する学者がいれば、民間伝承を追い続ける学者がいる。各地方の祭祀・習俗からアプローチを試みる学者もいるし、言語を体系化しようとする学者もいる。民俗学の面白いところは、学者の数だけアプローチが存在する上に、各説には「結論」と呼ばれるものがほとんど存在しない。地道なフィールドワークによって集められた資料を基に、想像の翼を広げることは可能でも、その羽ばたきには着地点が、ない。いわば民俗学とは広大無辺の広がりを見せる大海のようなもので、研究者は任意の場所から船出を試みる、孤独な航海者でなければならない。

だからこそ、民俗学のジャンル――研究者たちの学術社会ではない――は人を拒むことがないし、エンタテイメントを媒体として自由にアプローチできるのではないか。

その意味で、星野之宣は漫画という手法を用いて民俗学の海へと漕ぎだした偉大な先駆者であり航海者であるといえる。そのさらに後方より、小説という手漕ぎのたらい船に乗り込んで、今にも波にさらわれそうになっているのが、さしずめ北森　鴻であろうか。

ぼくはここに、偉大なる冒険者としての星野之宣を見る。

民俗学にはこんな話が残されている。

東北のさる地方に今も安置される即身仏には、地方の悪徳役人を殺害した上で山寺に逃げ込み、そこで出家得度し、苦行荒行に耐えて、ついには即身仏になったのだとする伝承がある。だが、よくよく調べてみると、そのような事実はなく、逆に悪徳役人の乱行により、農民が苦しめられていたらしい。その苦しみを一身に背負った上人こそが、この即身仏ではないか。被害者と加害者が、記録の中で反転している。

こんな例もある。

民話の里で知られる岩手県の某所に行ったときのことだ。山の奥に、飢饉で死んだ人々を供養するための五百羅漢があるという。今でもたいそう交通の便の悪いところで、山道を相当に歩かねば目的地に着くことができない。だがようやくたどり着いてみると、そこには、五百羅漢が見あたらない。よくよく目を凝らし、ほとんど3D視を試みるつもりであたりを見渡すと、実にもろい砂岩質の岩に、微かに線刻された像が見えてきた。あのときの恐怖感。断じてこれは供養を目的とした施設ではあり得ない。供養ならば、これほどの山奥に作る必要などないし、崩壊しやすい砂岩に線刻する必要もない。集落近くに、それこそ花崗岩でも使って観世音菩薩を彫って安置すれば、これぞ供養というものではないか。第一、羅漢とは最高位の修行を終えたとはいえ、しょせんは聖人であって仏ではない。

落ちていく衆生の魂を救済することなど可能なのか。

ここでも記録が歪められている。あえて人里離れた、ということはめったに出かけることなどできないところに置き、しかもそれがやがて風化、崩壊することを願って作られた五百羅漢ではないのか。

記憶の封印と、記憶の記録。二律背反する事象を共存させるために、人はしばしば事実を歪め、主客を逆転させる。先ほどの即身仏しかり、五百羅漢しかり、である。封印されるべき記憶は同時に記録される運命をも持ち合わせているのだ。

民俗学の海に漕ぎいでしものは、封印を解く鍵の持ち主でなければならない。

そして星野之宣――同時にそれは宗像伝奇でもある――は、その脳細胞の中に多数の鍵を秘めている。たぶん、今も。

さて本書は、ｆｉｌｅ．33～35の「流星剣」の一編を最後に、製鉄民族の謎を追うべく大学に休職願いを出し、旅立った宗像教授の後日談となっている。ｆｉｌｅ．36、37の「龍神都市」では宿敵ともいえる館林教授の依頼を受け、宗像は古代飛鳥の謎に挑むのである。

日本書紀に残された龍の記述はなにを指しているのか。

古代最大の争乱・壬申の乱における、大海人皇子の謎の行動の意味は。

天武天皇が試みた遷都計画は、なぜ信濃にまで及んだのか。

従来の「宗像シリーズ」には、民俗学手アプローチに平行して、SF要素、ミステリー要素、ホラー要素などが巧みに組み合わされるのだが、本作において、作者はほとんど意図的にそうしたストーリー部分を除去しているかに、見受けられる。そのぶん、作者の集中力は民俗学的謎の解明に注がれており、ことに大海人皇子の謎と解明は、エキサイティングですらある。

そのことは、file.38「蛇神融合」にもいえることで、読者は星野之宣の思考の跡を、正確にトレースする歓びに打ち震えさえすればよい。

この傾向は、file.24～26の「西遊将門伝」にその萌芽を見ることができると、北森は思う。黒衣の宰相とまで呼ばれ、江戸幕府の陰の功労者として名高い天海僧正が、平将門を西遊記に結びつけたという仮説を元に続けられる旅は、まさに民俗学テイストのロードムービーのように、読者の好奇心を刺激し、結末におけるカタルシスまで、良い意味で「引っ張り回してくれる」のである。

引っ張り回す。

「宗像伝奇シリーズ」の魅力は、この一点に集約されるのかもしれない。愛読者は星野之宣の想像力の奔放さ、奇抜さに、引っ張り回される権利を有しているといっても良いのではないか。なまなかな読者の「読み」を、壮大な構想で裏切って欲しい。その願いを見事

なまでに具現化してくれる諸作品を、ぼくはどれほど待ち望んだことだろう。待ち望み、満足し、そして本作の前集（第六集）の末尾を飾る「流星剣」を読んだ折の喪失感を、ぼくはまだ忘れることができない。

「たとえ寡作でもかまわないから、シリーズをうち切らないで」

「流星剣」の一編を読み、旅立つ宗像の後ろ姿に向かって、心密かに叫んだのは、ぼく一人ではなかったはずだ。それがこのような形で帰ってきてくれた歓びを、なんといったらよいのだろうか。とりあえずの言葉が見つからないから、やはりこういおう。

「まだ、続きますよね、このシリーズ」

さらにいうなら、本書には伝奇ロマンの巨匠であり、北森が例の民俗学ミステリーを書くきっかけともなった「稗田礼次郎シリーズ」の作者、諸星大二郎使徒の対談まで併録されている。縁日の物売りではないが、お得な、お得なサービス版であることは間違いない。すっかりただの愛読者となったぼく同様、深遠なる星野・宗像ワールドにどっぷりと浸ったあなた、最後にひとつだけお願いを聞いてください。

北森の民俗学ミステリーも、ちょっとだけ。本当にちょっとだけ、面白いんですよ。

ああ、星野先生、ごめんなさい。最後にあざとくＣＭしちゃって。

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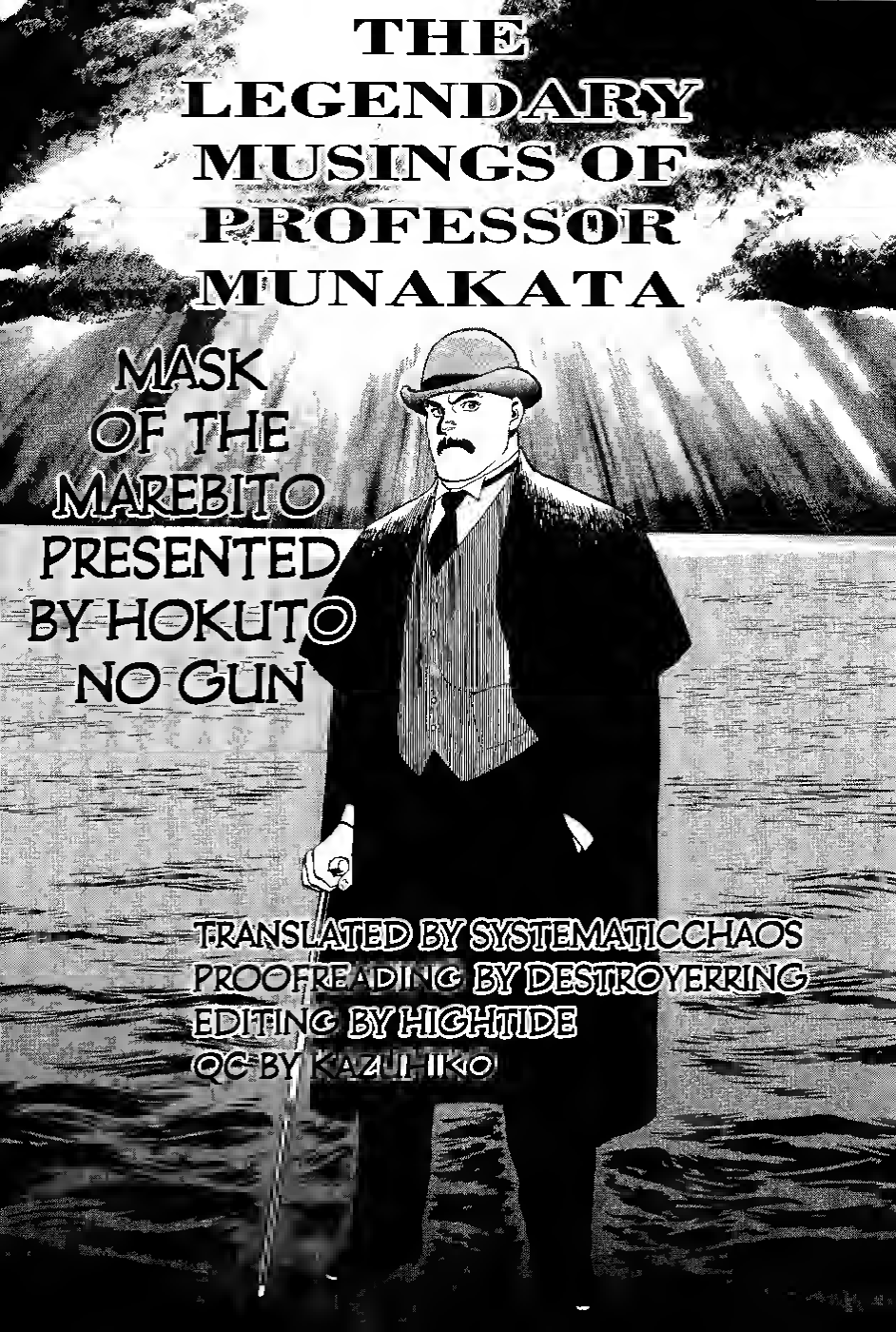
THE LEGENDARY MUSINGS OF PROFESSOR MUNAKATA

MASK OF THE MAREBITO PRESENTED BY HOKUTO NO GUN



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